



Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915)

# Speeches and Writings of GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

*Edited by*

Prof. D. G. KARVE, M. A.

*Associate, Servants of India Society, Poona*

AND

D. V. AMBEKAR

*Member, Servants of India Society, Poona*

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## PREFACE

Three editions of Gokhale's Speeches and Writings were published by Messrs. G. A. Natesan and Co., of Madras : the first in 1908, the second in 1916 and the third and last in 1920. As there had been no further edition and as the third edition was out of print, the Deccan Sabha of Poona, which is a sister institution of the Servants of India Society and of which Gokhale was one of the founders and first Secretary, thought it would be doing a service to the public if it brought out a new edition of Gokhale's Speeches and Writings, specially as it was understood on inquiry that Messrs. G. A. Natesan and Co. themselves had no intention of republishing the Speeches and Writings. The scheme of publication of the speeches prepared by the committee appointed by the Sabha envisaged the publication of the Speeches and Writings in three volumes : the first to contain Gokhale's economic speeches, the second his speeches on political subjects and the third educational and other. The first volume containing his speeches on the budget and other economic speeches was brought out by the Sabha in 1962. But for several reasons, the Sabha found itself unable to carry the scheme to its conclusion.

The task was then taken over by the Servants of India Society itself which, as is a matter of common knowledge, was founded by Gokhale. The work of editing the volume was entrusted by the Society to a Committee consisting of Prof. D. G. Karve, Shri S. G. Gokhale and Shri D. V. Ambekar (convener).

Making a careful list of all Gokhale's speeches in the legislatures and copying and comparing of the texts of the speeches with the official proceedings were first undertaken so that no speech should be left out and the text printed *in this volume may therefore be relied upon as a faithful copy of the original.* The first part of this volume containing the speeches delivered in the Legislative Councils is exhaustive and contains everything that Gokhale said, whether in the Imperial or the Bombay Legislative Council, on various subjects that engaged their attention.

In respect of the other speeches included in this volume, however, the policy adopted by the Committee was to include only speeches and writings of which the available texts could be considered reliable, if not authoritative. It had to reject some material which did not appear to answer this description. It may be hoped, however, that the reader will find in the volume a widely representative selection of the many speeches Gokhale made outside the legislature, in India, England, and South Africa.

Special efforts have been made to bring to light some valuable material, which, though historically important, had remained unpublished in earlier selections. To mention only a few instances, the reader will for the first time find in this volume the full texts of Sir C. Y. Chintamani's statement explaining the circumstances in which Gokhale felt constrained to refrain from voting



against the obnoxious Press Act which he fought tooth and nail by every means in his power, and Lord Sinha's letter in the same context (pp.71-74). Gokhale's press statement (pp.37-38) protesting against the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai which, joined to his private efforts, is generally believed to have largely influenced Lalaji's release also belongs to this category. His interview with *The Manchester Guardian* in which he ventilated the reported grievances of the Poona public in regard to the excesses of British soldiers in the course of the enforcement of anti-plague measures and connected papers (pp.160-72) will provide the reader the relevant material which should facilitate a fuller and more informed appraisal of the apology incident. Other examples are : Gokhale's speech on the notorious Crawford case, one of his earliest utterances (pp. 137-42), which drew from *The Times of India* strong criticism for its "trenchancy and vigour" and his statement on the Congress split at Surat (pp. 242-51) which gives a firsthand account of the happenings there.

Brief introductory notes have been given at the beginning of every speech so as to make its context clear. Foot-notes have been given, where necessary, to explain personal and other allusions. Sub-headings have also been inserted at appropriate places, which, it is hoped, will facilitate perusal.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help we have received from the staff of the Servants of India Society's Library and especially the Librarian, Shri M. V. Sovani, by way of prompt supply of necessary reference books. Our special thanks are also due to the Assistant Librarian, Shri V. D. Divekar, who prepared the index purely as a labour of love.

In spite of all possible care on our part it is likely that some mistakes, especially in printing, might have cropped in. If occasion arises to bring out a second edition, every effort will be made to eliminate these defects. Any suggestions from readers to make the work more useful will be gratefully received.

Poona  
February 28, 1966

D. G. KARVE  
D. V. AMBEKAR

# CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Introduction by D G Karve</i>	ix
<i>Important Events in Gokhale's Life</i>	1

## PART I

### COUNCIL SPEECHES

INDIAN WORKS OF DEFENCE	3
THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT	5
THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL, 1907	18
LALPAT RAI'S DEPORTATION, GOKHALE'S LETTER TO THE PRESS	37
THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL, 1910	39
THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL, 1911	47
THE PRESS ACT	59
SIR C Y CHINTAMANIS STATEMENT	71
LORD SINHA AND THE PRESS ACT	74
CRIMINAL TRIBES BILL	75
THE COUNCIL REGULATIONS	76
INDIANIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE	80
DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCILS	88
POLICE ADMINISTRATION	109
MOFUSSIL MUNICIPALITIES BILL	114

## PART II

### OTHER INDIAN SPEECHES

THE CRAWFORD CASE	137
THE POLITICAL DEMAND	143
SIMULTANEOUS PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS	146
PROTEST AGAINST HOME CHARGES	149
INDIAN COUNCILS ACT	157
PLAGUE OPERATIONS IN POONA	160
OUR POLITICAL SITUATION	173
THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY	181
CONGRESS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	187
BOYCOTT RESOLUTION	210
CONGRESS THANKS GOKHALE	212
THE WORK BEFORE US	215
THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT	223
PROTEST AGAINST THE CAUCUS	236

SURAT CONGRESS DEBACLE	242
DECENTRALIZATION COMMISSION : WRITTEN EVIDENCE	252
DECENTRALIZATION COMMISSION : ORAL EVIDENCE	264
THE MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS	287
THE REFORM PROPOSALS	291
MEMORANDUM ON REFORMS	300
'THE TIMES' AND THE REFORMS	304
HINDU-MOHAMEDAN QUESTION	307
POST-WAR REFORMS FOR INDIA	313

## PART III

## SPEECHES IN ENGLAND

DISCONTENT IN INDIA	321
INDIAN VIEW OF INDIAN AFFAIRS	326
NEW REFORM CLUB BANQUET	333
ENGLAND'S DUTY TO INDIA	340
SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR INDIA	350
SITUATION IN EASTERN BENGAL	358
RECALL OF SIR B. FULLER	364
THE INDIAN PROBLEM	368
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS FOR INDIA	376
EAST AND WEST IN INDIA	380
INDIAN RECEPTION TO GOKHALE	389

## PART IV

## INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

BRITISH INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA	399
INDIANS IN THE TRANSVAAL	409
PASSIVE RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA	417
THE JOHANNESBURG BANQUET	426
INDIAN RECEPTION AT PRETORIA	435
SOUTH AFRICAN IMPRESSIONS	442
SOUTH AFRICAN REPORT	454
THE GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION	471
DIARY OF GOKHALE'S TOUR	472
INDEX	475

## INTRODUCTION

### GOKHALE AND HIS POLITICS

#### *Spiritual Impact*

Mahatma Gandhi, in his brochure, *Gokhale — My Political Guru*, on p 55, observes as follows

It was a case of love at first sight, and it stood the severest strain in 1913 He seemed to me all I wanted as a political worker — pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion, and chivalrous to a fault It does not matter to me that he may not have been any of those things It was enough for me that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at He was and remains for me the most perfect man on the political field

One can easily imagine after a reading of the Political Speeches and Writings of Gokhale, how the innate nobility of his nature, his dedication to the cause of freedom and prosperity for his countrymen, and above all the religious and humanistic spirit in which he did all his public work produced a deep impression on a kindred spirit Gokhale enunciated in the Constitution of the Servants of India Society what he considered to be the requisites of a public worker in India in the following words :

Public life must be spiritualized Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake — equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country

That the emotional and spiritual impact between Gokhale and Gandhi was not one sided is borne out by the rich meed of appreciation which Gokhale paid to Gandhi almost from the first moment of contact with him He rarely mentioned Gandhi's name without coupling it with some words of appreciation and respect The following extract from the record of the 24th session of the Indian National Congress held in Lahore (pp 417-25) is a typical illustration of the manner in which Gokhale used to refer to Gandhi At this meeting while proposing a resolution which, among other things, expressed admiration for the patriotism and courage of Indians in South Africa, and offered " warmest encouragement to Mr M K Gandhi and his brave and faithful associates " Gokhale remarked

They (Indians in Transvaal) appointed at that meeting a deputation to proceed to England and that deputation was headed by our great and

illustrious countryman, Mr. Gandhi. Fellow-Delegates, after the immortal part which Mr. Gandhi has played in this affair I must say it will not be possible for any Indian, at any time, here or in any other assembly of Indians, to mention his name without deep emotion and pride. Gentlemen, it is one of the privileges of my life that I know Mr. Gandhi intimately and I can tell you that a purer, a nobler, a braver and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. Mr. Gandhi is one of those men, who, living an austere simple life themselves and devoted to all the highest principles of love to their fellow beings and to truth and justice, touch the eyes of their weaker brethren as with magic and give them a new vision. He is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot amongst patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high watermark.

On neither side can the words used by one in describing the other be construed as the mere expression of polite appreciation. Between the two there was an unmistakable bond of mutual understanding and support. It was this intimacy of the soul which made Gokhale say,<sup>1</sup> almost a few hours before his demise in February 1915, to Gandhi that

But whether you are formally admitted as a member or not (in the Servants of India Society), I am going to look upon you as one.

As will be clear from many a passage contained in this publication, in several essential principles and ways of approach to their fellow-men Gokhale and Gandhi reflected each other's standards of judgment and behaviour. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu,<sup>2</sup> who had exceptional opportunities of knowing both Gandhi and Gokhale intimately, spoke of Gokhale as "The great saint and soldier of national righteousness."

It is remarkable that both in Gandhi and Gokhale sympathetic observers marked righteousness as the most outstanding characteristic. Often righteousness is balanced by lack of practical insight and vigour. Neither Gandhi nor Gokhale suffered from this weakness. In response to the respective challenge of their times, and the opportunities of their environment, Gokhale carried on his struggle for the vindication of national righteousness in the legislative chambers of the British overlords in India, and Gandhi marshalled and led to success his disciplined bands of non-violent Satyagrahis in many a pitched battle with the armed forces of Government. The mass appeal and the organizing capacity of the two stalwarts differed in marked degree, but the message which the two sought to convey was identical.

#### *Early Steps*

It is now a hundred years since Gokhale was born and it is half a century since he left the scene of his aspirations and efforts. Of the

<sup>1</sup> GANDHI — *Gokhale — My Political Guru*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> SARAJINI NAIDU — *Reminiscences of Gokhale*, p. 22.

less than 50 years of his life almost half was spent in active public life. Born in May, 1866, Gokhale lived upto February 1915. It was not till the year 1889, however, that he made his first notable appearance on a public platform. Only three years before that date he had been brought into contact with Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade who was recognized on all hands as the doyen of devoted students of public questions, and of constructive social, economic and political workers. Only a year before this fateful meeting Gokhale had joined the band of patriotic and dedicated workers of Maharashtra who established the New English School, the Deccan Education Society, and the Fergusson College in Poona. At different times, till he left the Deccan Education Society in 1902, Gokhale taught Mathematics, English, History, Economics and Politics to students of the Fergusson College. Joining a body of lay missionaries at the age of 19 was an outstanding act of dedication which assumed forms of higher and higher sublimation as Gokhale passed through life. But his habits of deep and careful study, as well as insistence on apt and lucid diction, could only have developed through the daily labour which Gokhale had to undertake as a part of his academic duties. Gokhale's life-long appeal to young and especially to educated people appeared to be natural in one who entered public life through the portals of a school established by patriotic Indians.

The founders, and early life members, of the D. E. Society were interested in Education not merely as scholars. They took to education as the most potent instrument of national regeneration. Consistently with their duties as educationists they participated, according to their inclination and capacity, in other fields of public activities. Gokhale chose for his special extra curricular interest the field of political activity and reform. He became Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Conference in 1888. Such conferences as supporting organizations of the Indian National Congress were then being set up in the several provinces. As Secretary of one of the most active and influential among these bodies, Gokhale commenced the career of an Indian Congressman in which he was to find the fulfilment of his life's mission. In the same year, 1888, Gokhale accepted responsibility as Editor of the English side of an Anglo-Marathi weekly journal, called *Sudharak* (Reformer) of which Agarkar, the famous social reformer of Maharashtra and a founder of the Deccan Education Society, was the Chief Editor.

The *Sudharak* was essentially a non-sectarian journal devoted to bringing about comprehensive reformation among the people of India. Freedom and equality among men were held to be essential pre-conditions of individual and national progress. It was in this concept that education, in its wider sense, was sought to be promoted as the chief instrument of national regeneration. In fact such journals were, in the thinking of the founders of the Deccan Education Society, a necessary supplement to their scholastic activities. Neither Agarkar, nor Gokhale recognized any limits to the ambitions and aspirations of their nation. They felt convinced, however, that unless the institutional

framework of Indian society was reorganized so as to free the individual from restrictive social practices the fullest realization of the potentialities of Indian progress in the modern age would not be possible. Like education, freedom also must be carried to all members of the society, irrespective of class, creed, or sex, if humanity is to grow to the highest limits of its capacity.

### *Western Influence*

Both as student and teacher, Gokhale was influenced by the writings of eminent British philosophers and statesmen. Of these John Stuart Mill and Edmund Burke appeared to have been most favoured. Many of Gokhale's ideas which lay at the root of his appreciations and suggestions concerning current problems were derived from such classics as Mill's *Essays on Liberty*, and *Representative Government* and Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*. The moral revolt against the degrading effect of foreign autocracy, which Gokhale personified, was fully sanctioned, if not initially suggested, by Mill's ideas on the dignity of man and progress of society. The clear understanding of the process of constitutional change, and in particular appreciation of the healthy and lasting results of gradual reform, were contributions of Burke. The trait of moderation commonly attributed to Gokhale is referable only to what he considered to be an acceptable next step towards his goal of limitless progress for the individual and the society. The words which Gokhale used in controversial discussions were generally soft and in this respect he was inclined to share the well-known British trait of habitual understatement. As will be seen in several critical passages in this book, his language was always polished and not overtly emotional. But it was adequate to convey the full implications of his position in every situation.

### *Public Platform*

The virtue of gradualism so favoured by Gokhale is fully illustrated by his own career of increasingly important positions held by him and by the expanding sphere of his service to the nation. In the very first year of his career as a recognized public worker, he made three important speeches. Of these one was concerned with what may have normally passed as no more than an anti-corruption case against a senior official of the Government of Bombay, to wit Mr. Crawford, Commissioner, Central Division (pp.137-40). But when legal proceedings instituted against this official by the Government were sought to be stalled and sabotaged on racial grounds it became necessary for public-spirited citizens to come out with strong support for official action to uphold purity in public administration, irrespective of considerations of race. Gokhale harped on this theme of racial equality in India, and elsewhere in the British Empire, throughout his life.

In the same year, 1889, Gokhale made his debut on the Congress platform. It is not without some stirrings of political and personal interest that one notices the fact that Gokhale's very first contribution to a public debate from the Congress platform, on a subject of constitutional reform in India, was in

the shape of seconding an amendment proposed by Tilak (pp 144-45) The official resolution was in support of a scheme of Council Reform in which it was suggested that Provincial representatives on the Supreme Legislative Council should be elected directly by Municipal and Local Boards Tilak's amendment amounted to a narrowing of the electorate to the elected members of the Provincial Councils There was much to be said in favour of this more indirect method of election, and between them Gokhale and Tilak said it But this amendment was lost Gokhale had many a future occasion of success within the Congress But his subsequent avowal that his generation must be content to serve their countrymen more by their failures than by their successes appears to have an origin going as far back as his very first participation in public debate His second participation in a Congress discussion, that on a resolution concerning the Indian Public Services (pp 146-48) was more favourably received Gokhale continued to take a lively and a serious interest in the Indianization of Public Services, which he considered to be essential politically, economically and culturally Even at the time of his death he was a member of a Royal Commission on Public Services in India

### *Institutional Responsibilities*

Gradually, however, Gokhale came to occupy more responsible positions and his participation in public debates, both within and outside the Congress came to be received with greater respect In the year 1890 he became Secretary of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha which was then among the foremost of India's public associations for political work In addition to his duties as Secretary, Gokhale assumed responsibilities as Editor of the quarterly Journal of the Sabha Among the contributors of this Journal were persons like Ranade and G V Joshi, the latter being the first Indian publicist to make significant use of official statistics in support of popular representation of views Gokhale was to receive in later years almost as much collaboration from Joshi as he received guidance from Ranade During the next year, Gokhale had to take up more organizing responsibility within the Deccan Education Society, of which body he then became the Secretary He added further to his educational responsibility in 1895, when he became Fellow of the University of Bombay But that year was to be more significant in Gokhale's political career as a Congressman He was Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Poona session of the Congress It may be recalled that the very first session of the Congress was to have been held in Poona, but due to the prevalence of plague in that city that plan had to be dropped

### *Justice to India*

At an earlier session of the Congress (1893), speaking of the Indian Councils Act, 1892 (pp 157-59) Gokhale had some important observations to make to which he often harked back in later years Those referred mostly to subjects like expansion of Councils, especially of the non official and elected elements in them, and conferring upon them more positive functions in respect of the



After all political activities are chiefly of value not for the particular results achieved, but for the process of political education which is secured by exciting interest in public matters and promoting the self-respect and self-reliance of citizenship. This is no doubt a slow process but all growth of new habits must be slow to be real.

### *First Meeting with Gandhi*

The ideals, values and methods of political life inscribed in this declaration were to play a determining role in shaping Gokhale's own views on public questions, and in influencing his relations with the representatives of the British Government on the one hand and with the leaders of several political groups within the country on the other. It is noteworthy that it was exactly at this stage in the career of Gokhale, and in fact at the very moment when the principles of the party of Liberalism and Moderation were taking shape, that Gandhi had his first meeting with Gokhale. What Gandhi was then primarily interested in was to seek the support of Indian public men for the struggle which the Natal Indian Congress was waging against the Colonial Government to secure their rights as settlers. The "freedom from race and creed prejudices," and "the equality under the law" incorporated in the Manifesto were not mere empty words for Gokhale. He was prepared to back them with active support, whether it was in India or Natal. It was this first meeting between the two that laid the foundation of an abiding intimacy which was richly valued on either side.

Gokhale's first visit to England was undertaken in 1897 for the purpose of tendering evidence before the Welby Commission on behalf of the Deccan Sabha. The high merit of both the written and the oral testimony presented by him had been appreciated on all sides. Gokhale soon came to be recognized as one among the few well-informed and responsible exponents of the Indian view on public finance and administration in India. This first visit of Gokhale to England was, also, destined to be of great historical interest for the future of the political relationship between India and Great Britain. Like many a young graduate Gokhale was well steeped in the words of great liberal philosophers of England. Both for his own writings, and for his interpretation of the thoughts of other liberal philosophers and statesmen, Morley had a special attraction for educated Indians. At least in part he was their inspirer of a love for political liberty and their source of reassurance that under England's overall protection they would attain to that happy stage.

That the Liberal Party of Great Britain was then in opposition lent special prestige to them as friends and collaborators of those Indians who were striving to ensure the early realization of British pledges to India. When he was in England Gokhale called on Morley and attempted, among other things, to interest him and, through him, the Liberal Party in the activities of Indian politicians. From what Sir William Wedderburn, one time President of the Congress and always its most prominent exponent in U. K., said later on this

initial contact between Gokhale and Morley seems to have been at least partially responsible for Morley's acceptance of the India portfolio when it was offered to him several years later. It is more than probable that this circumstance influenced Gokhale in his attitude of obvious prepossession for and confidence in Morley and the British Liberal Party.

That Gandhi's briefing on the position of Indians in South Africa had not been neglected by Gokhale was borne out by the publication, in the same year, of an article of his in the *India Quarterly* published in London ( pp. 399-408). The main theme of the article was insistence on securing equality of treatment among citizens of all the races which constituted the British Empire. In normal circumstances with memories of the Welby Commission, meeting with Morley and other leaders in U. K., and publicity to the plight of Indians in South Africa, Gokhale should have returned in contentment, if not in triumph, to India. Instead, as luck would have it, he had to face the severest trial of his career in the very hour of his setting foot on the Indian soil.

### *Apology Incident*

That was the well-known incident of his Apology ( pp. 160-72 ). He had felt it to be his duty as a public man to stand up for his countrymen, when he was in England. The need for bold action had arisen in two somewhat divergent ways. On the one hand several friends from Poona, whose sense of responsibility he had then no cause to doubt, had written to him complaining in specific terms of the high-handedness and misbehaviour of some among those who were in charge of anti-plague measures in Poona. On the other hand, Indian correspondents of British papers and several writers in the British Press were severely criticizing leaders in India, especially those in Poona, for their lack of a sense of loyalty and responsibility. As a public man Gokhale felt it to be his duty to vindicate his own and his colleagues' reputation for loyalty and responsibility, and also to place before the British public the kind of happenings in Poona which had created an unusual stir in the Indian mind. In doing this he was acting as an honest public leader. His reference to the atrocities committed by some British soldiers in the course of the execution of their duties had created a wave of resentment in England. It was this that had also roused the wrath of the whole Anglo-Indian community. When on his return Gokhale found that his private correspondents, on whose information he had relied, were unable or unwilling to substantiate their complaints the only course open to him, as a gentleman, and as a respectable public man, was to tender an apology. An apology, which is worth anything either to the giver or to the receiver, has to be a full and unqualified one, and it has to be addressed to those who are the real sufferers of the wrong that is sought to be corrected by the apology. Gokhale rose magnificently to the occasion and thereby enhanced his own worth as a man and as a respectable leader of his countrymen. That in doing so he earned the odium of a large number of his less informed and less conscientious countrymen was the penance he had to

go through to attain the sublimity of his "Righteousness" which struck a responsive chord in Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu

After the apology, characteristically enough, it was the plague in Poona which attracted his first attention. He took active and energetic part in organizing relief for the victims and their relations. As he gradually recovered his mental calm and took up the threads of numerous public activities he found much in his environment to encourage him to further efforts at national service. In 1899 he was elected a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Gokhale always had more than his average share of a sense of public responsibility. When later on, in 1903, he was elected Joint General Secretary of the Congress, he toured the country delivering public speeches on current political problems. After his retirement from the Fergusson College in 1902, which also was the year in which he was elected President of the Poona Municipality, Gokhale became almost a whole time worker for the Congress. Whatever he did in India or abroad was done largely on behalf of the Congress.

### *Bombay Legislative Council*

He spent only a short span of two years as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. During his term of membership when the Mofussil Municipalities Bill came up for discussion Gokhale made an important speech in the course of which he had to declare his views both on the nature of Municipal Government and on the provision of communal electorates contained in the Bill (pp 115-34). He observed

We value local self-government not only for the fact that local work thereby is better done, but also for the fact that it teaches men of different castes and creeds, who have long been kept more or less apart, to work together for a common purpose. There are in all conscience causes for differences enough among the different sections of this land, and I submit that the legislature should not, in the best interests of the country, without the very strongest reasons, give any statutory recognition to these differences. There is nothing in the nature of local self-government which implies any conflict between the interests of one section and another. If the Council will turn to the list of "obligatory duties" and "optional duties," it will be seen that, except perhaps on the question of slaughter houses there is no chance of conflict of interest arising between the different communities. And on that particular question, if the Hindu Councillors anywhere neglected to construct slaughter houses for the benefit of Mohamedans and other inhabitants, Government have it in their power, under the provisions of the 'Control Chapter', to require recalcitrant municipalities to perform that duty. Then, if different sections are to be represented, why talk of the Hindu Community as a whole by itself? There are so many castes and sections of the community, and some of them can stand so wide apart from one another, that it will be necessary to recognize their differences, and then where are the Government going to stop?

What Gokhale thought as an unsound and almost absurd formula was ultimately retained in the Act. When later on the electoral principle was accepted for legislative councils, even what Gokhale thought were absurd limits of carrying communal representation to castes among the Hindus were also reached. It is only fair to add that in this speech Gokhale ended his remarks by stating : "I have no objection to Government providing for sectional representation by means of election provided they guarantee to the general rate-payers a minimum of half the seats." But the first pronouncement of Gokhale on the subject of communal representation brings out his general position in clear terms. Another part of his speech on the same Bill brings out his views on the important subject of separation of powers. While he upholds the principle of an executive separate from the deliberative body of the Municipal Council for large cities like Bombay, he favours the conferment of executive functions on popular bodies in the smaller mofussil towns.

### *Imperial Legislative Council*

When in December, 1903, an Amending Bill was moved in the Imperial Legislative Council to extend the scope of the Official Secrets Act of 1889 to cover even civil information, in addition to information bearing on military matters to which the original Act referred, Gokhale had an important speech to make both on the first and second readings ( pp. 5-17 ). Gokhale was a member of the Select Committee set up to consider the Amending Bill. Along with two other non-official members, Mr. Bose and Nawab Saiyyad Mahammud, Gokhale had appended a minute of dissent to the Select Committee's Report. Speaking about the minute Gokhale said :

We have expressed that dissent in the mildest terms which we could possibly find to convey our meaning. We did this both to mark our sense of the conciliatory manner in which the Hon'ble Member-in-charge of the Bill received many of our suggestions and in the hope that by thus removing from our dissent all trace of the angry criticisms to which the Bill has been subjected, we might make it easier for Government to proceed further in the direction of meeting the objections urged by the public.

In spite of this gentle technique, which was always the characteristic Gokhale way, no further concessions were made by Government. Intervening later in the course of discussion Gokhale was constrained to observe :

Nowhere throughout the British Empire is the Government so powerful relatively to the governed as in India. Nowhere, on the other hand, is the Press so weak in influence as it is with us. The vigilance of the Press is the only check that operates from outside, feebly, it is true but continuously, upon the conduct of the Government, which is subject to no popular control. It is here, therefore, if anywhere, that the Legislature should show special consideration to the Press, and yet here alone it is proposed to arm Government with greater power to control the freedom of the Press than in any other part of the Empire.

*Work of the Congress*

In the Congress session held at Madras in December, 1903 Gokhale, who was unable to be present, was elected Joint General Secretary. His elevation to this official position in the non official Parliament of the Indian people made him forget even more completely than before all thought of everything except service of the country through the Congress. Speaking at Madras in July 1904 (pp 173-80) he reviewed the history of the Congress during its existence of about twenty years, and asserted that considering the difficulties in their way, the position of strength occupied by the British bureaucracy in India and the many weaknesses among its people, they had indeed not done badly. Alluding to the recent rise of Japan, especially its industrial progress, he insisted on the inner unity between political and industrial advance and urged his countrymen to emulate the Japanese in their patriotism and discipline. He felt convinced that if the Congress persisted with greater vigour and tenacity in the task of political education, and organization of the people, they would soon attain the freedom and welfare of the country as a self-governing part of the British Empire. Speaking about the people who indulge in counsels of despair he said

Those who say that nothing is to be gained by political agitation they really do a great disservice to the country, they do nothing themselves and they only paralyse the efforts of others. It is said that history furnishes no example of a subject people rising by such methods as ours. I have myself paid some attention to history, and if I have been convinced of one thing more than another, it is this that you can never have a perfect parallel in history. It is impossible for circumstances to repeat themselves, though you have the common saying that history repeats itself. It may be that the history of the world does not furnish an instance where a subject race has risen by agitation. If so, we shall supply that example for the first time. The history of the world has not yet come to an end, there are more chapters to be added.

During the remainder of his life of a decade or so Gokhale himself added a few brilliant chapters, though the most significant of all was left to be added by his "younger brother"<sup>1</sup> and his stalwart supporters. Even in this speech Gokhale showed a keen awareness of the need to have greater discipline and greater devotion in the political life of the country.

"The day has gone by," he said, "when politics could afford to be amateurish in this land. It has been amateurish in the past, but the struggle is growing keener and keener and it is necessary that men should take up the duties and responsibilities of public life in the same manner as they choose their profession and devote their energies to it."

It is obvious that the need to have in each State at least a small band of

<sup>1</sup> GANDHI — *Story of My Experiments with Truth*, translated by J. D. Desai, Navajivan Karyalaya, 1933, p. 537

devoted and dedicated public workers which was engaging Gokhale's thought for some years past, was now assuming a more definite shape. Within less than a year of this speech in Madras, on June 12, 1905 at Poona, Gokhale administered the vows of membership to three of his colleagues along with whom he founded the Servants of India Society.

### *The Servants of India Society*

Besides the organizational features of the new body and the discipline of dedication to national service placed on members, the constitution of the Society also outlines the goal and programmes which the members are expected to follow (pp. 181-86). It states among other things, that

Its members frankly accept the British connection as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-Government within the Empire for their country and higher life generally for their countrymen is their goal.

The Servants of India Society will train men prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, and will seek to promote by all constitutional means the national interest of the Indian people. Its members will direct their efforts principally towards (1) creating among the people, by example and by precept, a deep and passionate love of the motherland, seeking its highest fulfilment in service and sacrifice; (2) organizing the work of political education and agitation, basing it on a careful study of public questions, and strengthening generally the public life of the country; (3) promoting relations of cordial goodwill and co-operation among the different communities; (4) assisting educational movements, especially those for the education of women, the education of backward classes and industrial and scientific education; (5) helping forward the industrial development of the country; and (6) the elevation of the depressed classes.

Several years later Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>1</sup> observed in his *Discovery of India*: "Gopal Krishna Gokhale once wrote in his gently ironical way of the inscrutable wisdom of Providence which had ordained the British connection for India. Whether it was due to this inscrutable wisdom or some process of historic destiny or just chance, the coming of the British to India brought two very different races together." Every student of history, most of all every great man, is entitled to read and interpret history in his own way. But quite obviously when Jawaharlal Nehru traced a gentle irony in Gokhale's avowal of the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, the full facts about Gokhale's philosophical and moral position could not have been placed before him. Gokhale was gentle, indeed sometimes very gentle. But he was never ironical, least of all about Providence. His faith in a Providence governing the destinies of men and nations was not a mere short cut or euphemism for chance. He

<sup>1</sup> J. NEHRU — *Discovery of India*, p. 239, Signet Press, Calcutta, 1948.

believed, as did Ranade, in a benevolent influence guiding the life of the world. Wisdom and benevolence were attributes of Providence which both were content to accept, though certain happenings in themselves may not be so easily explicable to the limited knowledge of even the most knowing and far-sighted among men. Gokhale, in fact, following Ranade, rationalized to his own satisfaction, the implied benevolence of "the coming of the British to India." Against the background of India's political and cultural history both of them felt that contact with the modern world of science and organization, as also with the political values of freedom and a national state was indispensable for a national movement of regeneration in India. There may be legitimate criticisms of this view, but it was not ironically conceived. In much of the programme of practical action indicated for members, the implications of this view were clearly spelt out. Indeed many of these items were adopted, in mass or in detail, by a number of other organizations as well. Later on when Gandhi outlined his constructive programme some of the tasks prescribed by Gokhale for his colleagues were enjoined on Gandhi's followers as well.

### *Mission in England*

Soon after the establishment of the Servants of India Society Gokhale undertook a visit to England on behalf of the Congress. His mission on this second journey to U K, was to explain to the British people the state of public feeling in India regarding the repressive acts of the regime of Lord Curzon, and in particular about the crowning piece of his arrogant disregard of Indian public opinion, the partition of Bengal. As it happened, that was also the time when a fresh General Election was to be held in U K and the Liberal Party which in opposition had shown sympathetic interest in India's claims to progressive self-government was expected to come into power. Curzon personified the stony and cold attitude which the entire bureaucratic government of India had adopted towards the demands of the Congress. Discontent was daily becoming more and more widespread and a crisis in Indo-British relations and in the internal political movement in India was fast developing. Leaders of the Congress, at least some among them, felt that if India's case was at this juncture placed before the British public and the new British Government the crisis may be forestalled. This was a delicate and by no means a very hopeful mission. The choice of Gokhale to carry it out, and his acceptance of the responsibility are indicative on the one hand of the great confidence placed in his patriotism and statesmanship by his colleagues and, on the other hand, of a fully restored vigour and balance of mind of Gokhale himself.

The most challenging assignment of the tour was a speech in Manchester on Indian Discontent (pp 321-25). It is true that Manchester was a stronghold of Liberalism and as such had a receptive atmosphere, so far as the general political theme is concerned. But the agitation for boycott of British goods started in Bengal had disturbed the mood of all connected with the British textile trade and even some of the friends of India in Great Britain

attempted to dissuade Gokhale from undertaking the Manchester assignment. Gokhale, however, was keen on explaining to the politically active section of the population of Manchester the real significance of the boycott of British cloth. He made it clear to his audience that the boycott did not signify on the part of the people of India any animosity either against Great Britain in general or against Manchester in particular. He recounted, with his characteristic lucidity, the background and the ugly features of the whole scheme of partition. He told them how all avenues of normal constitutional agitation in India and in Britain had been exhausted. An effective appeal to the British public could thus be made against the perverse policy of the bureaucracy in India and the British Government of the day in no other peaceful way than the boycott which all classes of people in Bengal had spontaneously adopted. This speech, far from being resented by the listeners, marked the beginning of a definite change in the attitude of the Liberal Party towards the Partition issue.

The really important group of speeches was, however, addressed to more sophisticated audiences in London. On some of these occasions also, Gokhale had to speak before informed and interested but by no means very sympathetic gatherings. His address to the East India Association on Self-Government for India ( pp. 350-57 ) must have jarred on the ears of at least some die-hards in the audience. In fact Gokhale felt called upon at the end of his speech to thank the Association all the more heartily because of this recognized disagreement. But it was exactly on such occasions that the respectful, objective and firm style of Gokhale ensured for him a substantially courteous reception. Moreover, even if no immediate agreement was obtained the seeds of doubt and faint stirrings of second thoughts were planted in the minds of several members of the opposition. This is exactly why the British bureaucrats in India disliked these visits of Gokhale which ensured for him notable reception both in the British Press and among the leaders of Parliamentary opinion. Gokhale invariably appealed to the conscience, the feeling of honour and the high constitutional principles of the British people. He successfully turned the ire of the British people to their bureaucratic representatives in India by stating :

There is no doubt that the old faith of the people in the character and ideals of British rule has been more than shaken and its place is being steadily taken by a conviction that however great England may be, she is not great enough to forego voluntarily the gains of power from considerations of mere justice or national honour. I do not say that such a view is quite just to the average man or woman of this country . . . but the people of India can judge of the intentions of Englishmen only from their experience of those who go out to India to exercise authority over them.

He reminded his audience that " After all, India's willing acceptance of the British connection can only be based on reason or enlightened self-interest." He went on to assert that, " They want their country to be a prosperous, self-governing integral part of the Empire, like the Colonies, and not a mere poverty-



stricken, bureaucratically held possession of that Empire.' The full significance of this speech can be realized if we note that it was made in England to an audience of retired Anglo-Indian bureaucrats and their mostly conservative backers well before the Calcutta Congress at which Swaraj, that is the status of a self-governing colony of the Empire, was declared to be the goal of the Congress. It was after this claim to freedom and prosperity on behalf of his countrymen that Gokhale uttered his grave warning to the British people:

And here I repeat that unless the old faith of the educated classes in the character and ideals of British rule is brought back, England will find on her hands before long another Ireland, only many times bigger, in India

By comparison his other speeches on the need for political reform in India were addressed to more friendly audiences in London. Speaking at the National Liberal Club on *England's Duty Towards India* (pp 340-49), he traced a natural ideological alliance between Indian reformers and British Liberals. He urged on them as the new Party in power to proceed firmly with the task of reconciliation and reconstruction in India, which was neglected and disfavoured after Lord Ripon had laid the foundations of local self-government. The absurd anomaly of wooing Japanese support against Russia, while alienating the Indian people, needed an early correction. So did the policy of racial discrimination against coloured inhabitants and settlers in Crown colonies like Transvaal, which in this respect were often worse than the self-governing colonies like Natal

Speaking to the New Reform Club in November, 1905 (pp 333-39), Gokhale recounted the full story of Lord Curzon's complete undoing of all the assurances of the British Sovereign and of the aspirations of the Indian people. Racial discrimination in the due process of law and in the services, suppression of the liberties of citizens, officialization of university managements and reduction of the powers of local self-governing bodies were only a few of the several measures of his regime which had created an explosive situation in India. *The moral which Gokhale derived from this story, for himself and for the well-meaning among the British people, was that so long as the system of foreign bureaucratic rule has not been replaced by Indian self-government the declared goals of British policy in India will not be realized.* Having made the declarations of racial equality and given the assurances of equal protection of laws, having started modern institutions of education and government, England ought not to flinch from taking the crucial steps forward, long ago anticipated by Macaulay and Ripon. The system of government where supreme power is vested in persons who are only temporary residents of the country was unnatural

The only solution that is possible — a solution demanded alike by our interests and by your interests, as also by your national honour — is the steady introduction of self-government in India

The echoes of several sentiments expressed by Gokhale in the course of his public speeches in England on this occasion (1905) are clearly traceable in

later correspondence and pronouncements of Morley and Minto. In fact it is doubtful whether in the absence of the favourable background and opinion created by Gokhale, the reforms of 1909 could have been incorporated into the parliamentary programme of the new Liberal Government in Great Britain. Not only in the acceptance of the urgent need for political reform, but in regard to at least some of the broad outlines of the constitutional scheme Gokhale's influence was unmistakable.

### *President of the Congress*

The most important political speech which Gokhale made in this eventful year (1905) was his address as President of the Congress session held at Banaras (pp. 185-209). Not only the fact that he attained the honour of this high position at a comparatively young age, but the unerring justice of his observations and the broad vision of his future aspirations justify Jawaharlal Nehru's statement<sup>1</sup> that "*Gokhale was considered one of the Elder Statesmen even when he was in his late thirties.*" The political situation in India was at that time so tense, almost so desperate, as to test even Gokhale's statesmanship to its last limit. To start with, there was the impending visit of the Prince of Wales. The country, and especially Bengal, was in no mood to come out with declarations of loyalty and welcome. On the other hand the cause of securing Indian political reform through an Act of the British Parliament was not likely to be helped by an attitude either of sullenness or of hostility towards a representative of the British Crown. Gokhale had the insight and the courage to state that the Crown in the British Constitution is above party politics of the Government of the day. The King represents the permanent non-partisan elements of British policy, such as are reflected in the Queen's Proclamation, which was a charter of India's rights to freedom and equality within the Empire. In welcoming the Prince the people of India were expressing their loyalty to the fountain of these cherished ideals of British rule in India.

While Gokhale had a series of hard things to say about Lord Curzon's administration he had also to be fair to the new incumbent of the office of the Viceroy, Lord Minto. There was no reason to judge him before he had an opportunity to initiate his own policy. In anything that he did to retrace the repressive measures and other undesirable features of his predecessor's rule, the Viceroy was entitled to have the fullest cooperation of the Indian people. Lord Minto himself could ask for no more. This attitude of reciprocal conciliation adopted by Gokhale in his Presidential speech and thereafter went a long way in creating a bridge between him and the other Congress leaders on the one hand, and the new Viceroy and the new Government of His Majesty at Home, represented by the Liberal Cabinet of Campbell-Bannerman, on the other. The prolonged negotiations about reform which had to progress through the changing vicissitudes of Indian and British politics could not have been brought

<sup>1</sup> J. NEHRU — *Autobiography*, p. 195 (The Bodley Head, 1947).

to a constructive and fruitful end in the absence of an atmosphere of responsive cooperation created for the new representative of the Crown who succeeded Lord Curzon

For Curzon as a devoted and capable administrator Gokhale had great regard. But as a representative of the British Crown sent to direct the Government of India according to the terms of the Proclamation and the several Parliamentary enactments no worse choice could be imagined. Curzon had no respect either for the people of India or for their culture. He mistrusted their loyalty and their competence. He suppressed with vigour even the natural outlet to free expression or free civic organization of the people. By the time he left the shores of India, frustration of all the politically-minded people in the country and their estrangement from the bureaucratic rulers was so extreme, especially over the partition of Bengal, that Gokhale felt constrained, to observe

If all Indians are to be treated as no better than dumb driven cattle, if men, whom any other country would delight to honour are to be thus made to realize the utter humiliation and helplessness of their position in their own, then all I can say is "Good bye to all hope of cooperating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interest of the people." I can conceive of no graver indictment of British rule in India than that such a state of things should be possible after a hundred years of that rule.

Gokhale had very much at heart the cause of Indian industrialization and he wholeheartedly approved of the creed of Swadeshi as a policy of voluntary protectionism. He had also approved and appreciated the political results of the boycott movement in Bengal. In principle for a similar cause in similar circumstances he would not object to a general or prolonged boycott. Expatiating on this somewhat complex subject, he explains his position as follows.

This (boycott movement) they did with a two fold object, first as a demonstration of their deep resentment at the treatment they were receiving, and secondly, to attract the attention of the people in England to their grievances, so that those who were in a position to call the Government of India to account might understand what was taking place in India. It was thus as a political weapon, used for a definite political purpose, that they had recourse to the boycott, and in the circumstances of their position they had every justification for the step they took. And I can tell you from personal experience that their action has proved immensely effective in drawing the attention of English people to the state of things in our country. But a weapon like this must be reserved only for extreme occasions. There are obvious risks involved in its failure and it cannot be used with sufficient effectiveness unless there is an extraordinary upheaval of popular feeling behind it.

It is obvious that Gokhale had no ideological or conscientious objection to boycott as a political weapon. He felt that in the India of 1905 its general adoption was not warranted either by need or by feasibility. It is interesting

to note that some leaders who then held very advanced positions on this subject demurred to Gandhi's non-cooperation movement in 1920 as too premature and too costly. This only shows that with great leaders of political, as of armed conflicts, judgments in the choice of strategy and weapons are apt to differ. It is only the issue of the struggle which renders post-facto validity to many a hazardous venture.

In his Presidential address Gokhale minced no words in denouncing the evils of economic drain or blood-letting in a system of absentee capitalism, or of the dwarfing of a subject race under the autocratic rule of another. "The goal of the Congress," as he put it, "is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that in course of time, a form of Government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the Empire." While effective self-government is unequivocally demanded, as regards the form of government Gokhale was not quite certain that any particular type then obtaining in British colonies could with advantage be bodily transferred to India. For instance, as he later on indicated in many of his speeches on reform, he was inclined to favour some constitutional checks on the omnipotence of the legislature. He had his own views also on the matter of group or indirect elections, and he would have favoured a much greater measure of regional decentralization of power than was normal in British colonies. A study of the German federal, and the French local, governments had influenced Gokhale's views on the internal structure of a self-governing state. The stage at which an overall view of a desirable and complete constitution for India could or need be taken was not reached while Gokhale lived. It is, however, important to record that *beyond the principle of self-government within the Empire he made no commitment* as regards the suitability to India of any other feature of the British or of the colonial system of Government.

While invoking the authority of Gladstone's dictum — "It is liberty alone which fits men for liberty. This proposition like every other in politics, has its bounds, but it is far safer than the counter doctrine, wait till they are fit." Gokhale felt that there is a definite advantage in a gradual, rather than sudden or cataclysmic, transformation from an autocratic to a democratic way of living: "for it is a reasonable proposition that the sense of responsibility required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West can be acquired by an Eastern people through practical training and experiment only." No question of ethics or of the bonafide desire of British Parliament to grant powers of self-government is raised in this context. Later experience in India, and in other countries attaining independence through several ways, fully indicates the advantage of gradualism favoured by Gokhale. From another angle, it is significant to note that a new regime tends to be sustained by the means through which it is brought into being. On this subject, at a later stage Gandhi<sup>1</sup> has made his position clear in similar terms. "It is true we cannot rise till our political condition is reformed. But

<sup>1</sup> GANDHI — *Gokhale — My Political Guru*, p. 50.

it is not true that we should be able to progress if our political condition undergoes a change by any means and in any manner."

Gokhale had an obvious ideological and emotional commitment to Morley. He hoped for noticeable progress of Indian political reforms during the latter's tenure of office as Secretary of State in the Liberal Cabinet. He owned to some pessimism as to the influence which the obstructionist bureaucracy may exercise on Morley's progressive intentions. All these somewhat conflicting thoughts are best expressed in his own words :

The new Prime Minister (Campbell-Bannerman) is a tried and trusted friend of freedom. And as regards the new Secretary of State for India, what shall I say ? Large numbers of educated men in this country feel towards Mr. Morley as towards a Master, and the heart hopes and yet trembles, as it had never hoped or trembled before. He, the reverent student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone — will he courageously apply their principles and his own to the Government of the country or will he too succumb to the influences of the India Office around him, and thus cast a cruel blight on hopes, which his own writings have done so much to foster ?

Gokhale was so conscious of the difficulties that lay in the way of India's progress to freedom that he emphasized the moral, more than the substantive, advantage of a popular struggle. "The real moral interest of a struggle," he said, "such as we are engaged in, lies not so much in the particular readjustment of present institutions which we may succeed in securing, as in the strength that the conflict brings us to be a permanent part of ourselves. The whole life of a people, which is broader and deeper than what is touched by purely political institutions is enriched even by failures, provided the effort has been all that it should be. For such enrichment the present struggle is invaluable."

Exalted as this moral optimism was, it would have left the large audience of Congressmen somewhat cold, had Gokhale not added a peroration in which he invoked Ranade's prophetic words :

With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly by all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and lastly, with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny.

### *Crucial Five Years*

The quinquennium which followed the Banaras session of the Congress was one of the most crucial and significant in the political history of India. Following on the partition of Bengal, and the wave of a resurgent anti-Western feeling originating from the Japanese victory over Russia, all types of intensive political activity was spreading in the country. The prestige of the Westerner was shaken and verbal as well as physical challenges to its pretensions were

freely offered. A number of organizations, not strictly limited to political objectives, were started with a strong revivalist trend. Within existing political bodies such as the Congress, a vigorous challenge was being offered to the old leadership represented by Gokhale which was accused of being over-trustful and not sufficiently enterprising. Gokhale fully sympathized with the ultimate objective of national freedom, and he was not too sure that even if Morley did agree to move as far and as fast as Gokhale desired, the influences surrounding him in England and in India would allow him to do so. Gokhale, however, felt that considering the stage at which general political education and consciousness of the Indian people were, it was desirable, as the next step, to get out of the new British Government as full a measure of advance as possible. By using the new opportunities to consolidate our position and to equip ourselves to take a longer step in future, he thought we would be acting in the best interests of the country.

In any case, so far as he himself was concerned, Gokhale felt that to back Morley in his progressive and liberal measures, and to influence their formulation to the best of his opportunities was the most positive contribution which he could then make to the progress of the nation. Friends of India in England had realized that Gokhale's appeal to the initially well-inclined section of the British public was a valuable asset in securing parliamentary support for progressive policies in India. It was in response to such a feeling that during 1906 Gokhale undertook two journeys to England. Morley's firm refusal to support the high-handed measures of the Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal had raised a veritable storm against him. By his speeches in London on the state of things in East Bengal Gokhale was able to convey to the British public the flagrantly un-British nature of Fuller's rule in East Bengal (pp. 358-63). Even elementary rights of citizenship such as those of education, free speech, and public meetings were peremptorily violated, sometimes by mere executive action. There was no prospect of local feeling being pacified so long as this state of things continued. The reactions of the East Bengal situation on the rest of the country were also most undesirable. The good intentions of the British people and the promises made in their solemn declarations had to be vindicated by suitable action. Gokhale felt that nothing short of a removal of the Lieut.-Governor from the scene of his high-handed actions would meet the requirements of the case (pp. 364-67). Morley persisted in his firm refusal to back Fuller, and the latter eventually resigned. Fuller's discomfiture came as a reassuring factor in an otherwise gloomy situation. But the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy never forgave either Morley or Gokhale for the part which they had played. In their own way both continued to draw on themselves the full measure of open and concealed opposition from official quarters in India to all measures designed to recognize the claim of Indians to equality and to freedom.

For the part played by Gokhale in representing to the British public India's case on several subjects of national importance he was thanked by a formal

resolution moved at the Congress session held in Calcutta at the end of the year (1906) (pp 212-14) In acknowledging this outstanding mark of grateful appreciation of his fellow workers Gokhale emphatically called upon them to treat Morley's efforts at liberalizing the Indian government with sympathetic appreciation and to lend to them maximum co operation He again made it clear that the actual extent of these reforms may not be all that they desired, but it was only by accepting them and working them in the spirit in which they were offered that advance to further more liberal stages would be facilitated Throughout this period almost all of the public speeches of Gokhale addressed to his countrymen contained a strong plea for appreciative co operation with the new Secretary of State in his attempts to liberalize and popularize the system of government in India

### *Reforms and Political Agitation*

Early in 1907 Gokhale addressed two important public meetings one in Allahabad and the other in Lucknow The former meeting was presided over by Motilal Nehru (pp 215-22) Gokhale said that the new century had opened with a new consciousness of hope and strength in the East and even Lord Curzon's administration had been a blessing in disguise as it had helped to rouse the political consciousness of the people In the course of his remarks Gokhale clarified his own position on several important questions of political objectives and methods As regards the goal to be reached by patriotic efforts of workers he observed

I recognize no limits to my aspiration for our motherland I want our people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs I want our men and women without distinction of caste or creed to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration, in its essence and its reality, will be realized within this Empire

The whole concept of constitutional agitation was subjected to an analytical review and Gokhale stated his choice of methods in the following terms What were the methods they were entitled to employ? The first idea suggested was that physical force was excluded Proceeding with the consideration further three things were excluded—rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion, and resort to crime Roughly speaking, barring these three things, all else was constitutional No doubt everything that was constitutional was not necessarily wise or expedient Prayers and appeals to justice lay at one end Passive resistance, including even its extreme form of non payment of taxes till redress was obtained, lay at the other end

On the subject of wisdom or expediency of any particular method at a

given moment opinions may differ. In particular any suggestion of a complete dissociation from governmental organization was unacceptable to Gokhale. As he put it: "the idea that they should leave the authorities severely alone and seek to attain their goal independently of them was inadmissible."

That the bureaucracy would generally be hostile to reforms was only to be expected. A sudden or cataclysmic change, even if it could be brought about, was not the best way to ensure their progress through conflicting claims and unfamiliar lines of organization. Above everything else he exhorted his countrymen not to be impatient and not to be deterred by only small gains and frequent failures.

Nation-building is nowhere an easy task. In India it is beset with difficulties which are truly formidable and which will tax to the uttermost all our resources and all our devotion. Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes. We, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures.

Not a very palatable thought but fully realistic and prophetic. What the generation of Gokhale and the Chairman, Motilal Nehru, in spite of their best efforts failed to attain, the generation of the Chairman's son, Jawaharlal Nehru, triumphantly achieved!

The speech at Lucknow which followed within a week was devoted largely to the Swadeshi movement (pp. 223-35). As a method of a kind of voluntary protection to national industries Gokhale welcomed the movement. His understanding of the basic interdependence of nations even under a regime of protectionism was, however, too sound to make him a supporter of a general boycott of foreign goods. Even in this speech, however, Gokhale's mind was really on the coming reforms, and the possible emergence within the Congress of a feeling of impatience and dissatisfaction with them. He tried to minimize this possibility by telling the audience:

In the struggle that lies before us, we must be prepared for repeated disappointments. We must make up our minds that our progress is bound to be slow, and our successes in the beginning at any rate, comparatively small. But if we go to work with *firm faith in our hearts*, no difficulties can obstruct our way for long, and the future will be more and more on our side. After all, the industrial problem, formidable as it is, is not more formidable than the political problem.

At this stage Gokhale was really in a very difficult position. The obstructionist and repressive bureaucracy in India was doing all it could to drive patriotic Indians, especially the educated youth, to a position of extreme opposition. The impact of this growing volume of resentment on the more



aggressive and recalcitrant groups within the Congress was bound to cause a serious rift in that body. On the other hand Morley had either not the courage, or indeed the effective political power, to arrest the growth of intolerance and opposition among the ranks of the bureaucracy in India. The measure of reform which both Morley and Minto, especially the latter, proposed was so meagre that even in the most favourable circumstances effective control of Governmental power would continue to remain with the foreign bureaucracy. Even Gokhale could not be so optimistic as to hope that the reforms, if and when they came, would extend to sharing executive power of government with representative Indians. In these circumstances little was left for Gokhale to do beyond exhorting his countrymen to patience and to constructive co-operation, and to press on the British authorities the need of a very early and a very large measure of political reform. In doing this he earned the immediate disfavour both of his countrymen and of the main British architects of the impending reforms, Morley and Minto.

### *Morley-Minto Reforms*

Both Morley and Minto were convinced that the political relations with India and the form of its administration were unnatural. Lord Morley<sup>1</sup> in a communication to Minto hoped that "If we can hatch out some plan and policy for half a generation, that will be something, and if for a whole generation, that would be better. Only I am bent, as you assuredly are, on doing nothing to loosen the bolts." Minto,<sup>2</sup> if anything, was moving even more slowly and reluctantly. Regarding Gokhale's prodding in respect of political reform he observes "Gokhale was very interesting and, I thought fair. The whole thing is a tremendous problem and there is a dead wall of official resistance always ready to obstruct anything which can be twisted into meaning interference with British official rights." Writing to Morley, Minto<sup>2</sup> admits that "the more I see, the more convinced I am that we cannot continue to govern India with any hope of tranquility until we give her educated classes a chance of a greater share in the government of the country." And yet both Minto and Morley spoke in terms of unmitigated disapproval of Gokhale's insistence on the rights of Indian leaders to conduct a peaceful agitation, and on the need so to enlarge the scope of reforms as to meet the demands of at least the more reasonable among the Indian leaders.

On the subject of Lala Lajpat Rai's deportation without trial (pp 37-38), Gokhale had entered a strong protest. Referring to this Minto<sup>2</sup> writes to Morley

As to Gokhale, if he chooses to play with fire he must take the consequences. We can't afford to let him tamper with the Army, and if he says any-

<sup>1</sup> MARY COUNTESS OF MINTO—*India Minto and Morley*, 1905-1910 (Macmillan, 1934) pp 113, 161, 240, 418, 237.

<sup>2</sup> MARY COUNTESS OF MINTO—*India Minto and Morley*, 1905-1910 (Macmillan 1934) pp 109, 127, 150, 163, 235, 6, 417.

thing to me as to what has occurred I shall tell him straight to his face. I am thoroughly disappointed in Gokhale; I had liked what I had seen of him and believed that he was honest at heart, but the part he has played of late has disgusted me. As an honest moderate he has lost a great opportunity of discountenancing rank sedition and what you tell me of his references to your speech shows either that he is incapable of understanding the real friends of India or that he is, as you say, as big a revolutionist as Lajpat and the rest of them.

Within three months of his having penned this petulant communication to Morley, the Viceroy<sup>1</sup> had to pen another in which he confessed that :

As to Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, I have not a shadow of doubt that we must in common justice release them, and that the sooner we do so the better. Now that we have declared the Punjab to be quiet we cannot logically justify their further imprisonment.

Morley on his part felt hurt that Gokhale, instead of taking the opportunity to compromise with the British Government and accept the partial concession to his demands, was still pressing for further reforms to avoid a split among Indian leaders of the Congress. Instead of recognizing the patriotism and love of justice and fairness on the part of Gokhale, Morley<sup>2</sup> accused him of merely being an inept politician. In a communication to Minto he says :

One of the most interesting things that have come my way this week is a letter from Gokhale dated Oct. 11, 1907. The one absorbing question, he says, is how the split in Congress, now apparently inevitable, is to be averted. I have often thought during the last twelve months that Gokhale, as a party manager, is a baby. Now, if I were in Gokhale's shoes I should insist on quietly making terms with the bureaucracy on the basis of Order plus Reform. If he would have the sense to see what is to be gained by this line, the 'split' when it comes should do him no harm, because it would set him free to fix his aims on reasonable things, where he might get out of us sixty or seventy per cent of what he might ask for.

Thus, when put to the test, even Morley, on whom Gokhale looked as on a Master, expected him to make terms with the bureaucracy on a sixty per cent basis, forgetting his aim and willingly forsaking his comrades for his official allies ! Had Gokhale been no more than a partisan or a factious politician probably he would have made himself personally more acceptable to the Secretary of State and to the bureaucracy. His standing out for the liberties of colleagues, with whom he did not always see eye to eye on everything, or his exerting himself to keep the Congress united by pressing on the British Government the need and the justice of larger reform measures was not to the liking of their lordships. On the other hand his opponents in the Congress accused him of too much of a compromising spirit and of deliberately working to undo the more advanced positions reached at the Calcutta

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note 2 on p. xxxi. <sup>2</sup> See foot-note 1 on p. xxxi.

Congress In the correspondence which he published in a Calcutta paper on the subject of the debacle at the Surat session of the Congress (pp 242-51) the soundness, and at the same time the difficulties, of his position as an honest servant of the Congress and of India are fully revealed

*Lala Lajpat Rai*

It was on this incident, the deportation of Lajpat Rai and the persecution of the other leaders of the Punjab without even the shred of any evidence of wrong-doing on their part, that Gokhale based his strong attack (pp 18-36) on a Bill to authorize prevention of meetings likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance of public tranquility

That a man like Lala Lajpat Rai, loved by thousands not in his province only, a man of high character and of elevated feeling, a keen religious and social reformer, and a political worker who, whatever his faults, worked only in broad daylight, should have been suddenly arrested and deported without a trial — this was a proceeding which stunned the people throughout India And as regards the Rawalpindi case, what shall I say! For four months the whole country witnessed the spectacle of the venerable Lala Hansraj, a man as incapable of promoting disorder as any member sitting at this table — with other gentlemen equally respectable, rotting in the lock-up on a charge of inciting to violence and conspiring against the Crown! It will be long before the memory of the suffering of these men is wiped from the public mind Meanwhile the country is waiting to see how the authorities deal with those who brought these sufferings on them by producing evidence which the trying Magistrate has pronounced to be 'most untrustworthy, and probably fabricated'! With these things happening in the country, is it any wonder that the voice of those who counsel patience and moderation and self-restraint should be for the time at a discount among their countrymen? The occurrences of the last six months have afforded ample encouragement to those who like to talk strongly and do not occasionally mind talking wildly

He again reminded the Viceroy and the other Councillors that when one speaks of Loyalty in India he speaks not of a sentiment similar to that of feudal Europe or of Rajput India, but of a feeling of attachment to British rule and of a desire for its stability based on enlightened self-interest, on an appreciation of what the rule has on the whole done for the people in the past and of the conditions which it ensures for future progress. In spite of Gokhale's reasoned opposition this Bill was put on the statute book When the Act came for a renewal at the end of three years Gokhale recalled his opposition to the original Act, which he described as a Draconian piece of legislation (pp 39-46) He supported the description by reference to a case in East Bengal in which members of a local community were proceeded against under the Act for meeting to consider what steps they should take to meet the situation created by a strike of barbers!

*Decentralization and Democracy*

While attending to the best of his ability to urgent problems created either by his more ebullient colleagues in the Congress or by the determined official opponents of equality and freedom, during proceedings in the Council Gokhale was doing all he could to activate, accelerate and broaden the course of British official policy of liberalization and democratization of governmental machinery in India. The note which he submitted to the Royal Commission on Decentralization (pp. 252-63) emphasized two points of basic significance for the evolution of a federal democracy. The officials' interest in decentralization was confined to seeking more powers of independent action for the Provincial Governments. Gokhale felt convinced that unless this process of official decentralization was simultaneously accompanied by a measure of popularization of the provincial governments they would only emerge as "little despotisms." They would be a greater source of local tyranny or high-handedness than the system under which a central Government for all India has to decide a policy before it can have effect anywhere in the country. Gokhale stood for a substantial provincialization of all internal administration on condition, however, that the Provincial Governments were suitably democratized. Gokhale's preference for decentralization with democracy did not stop at the provincial stage. He desired, and recommended, that District Administration also should be decentralized and democratized in two ways. Functions which could be left to the District Local Boards should be administered by those bodies, and their composition should be progressively popularized. Functions which continue to be the responsibility of the District Collector or Commissioner as representative of the Provincial Government should be administered by him in consultation with an Advisory Council which also should be increasingly democratized. This proposal about the District Boards and Councils (pp. 88-108) sought to give effect to a plan of all-round local self-government through elected bodies adumbrated by Ranade. In almost every speech or writing of Gokhale on the subject of Governmental reform this part of constitutional reorganization is given a prominent place. He was aware of the most obvious objection on the score of avoidable duplication of bodies. This he sought to meet by a further proposal to broaden, at an appropriate stage, the functions of a fully democratized District Board so as to include certain advisory responsibilities and rights concerning provincial administration within the district as well.

*Order with Reform*

Morley's prescription for India, Order with Reform, which he tried unsuccessfully to "sell" to Gokhale was administered none the less during 1908 with vigour as regards the former and considerable hesitation and weakness as regards the latter. By a ruthless exercise of authority both under the ordinary and extraordinary criminal law a veritable reign of terror was let loose in the country. It was the belief of the Viceroy and his

Anglo-Indian advisers that unless special powers of coercion were vested in Government the life and property of Europeans were not safe. They were persuaded further to believe that unless the European population in India was so reassured they may take the law into their own hands and a civic disaster would follow. Considering the relative positions of the armed strength of the Government and the utter helplessness of a completely disarmed people, this cry of Europeans in danger was nothing but a bureaucratic ruse to soften the Viceroy's and especially the Secretary of State's enthusiasm for reform. While Minto recognized the need to incorporate into government some elements from among loyal Indians, his actual programme to give effect to this policy was both elementary and crude. He appears to have favoured a Council of Notables, or of Nabobs as Morley put it. This body of about sixty completely nominated members was to act in a purely advisory capacity. When Minto found that his proposal did not evoke favourable reception he suggested a small expansion of councils, with official and nominated majorities. In fact *he preferred to continue the earlier system of having a confirmatory stage of nomination even after preliminary elections for the "elected" seats had taken place.* Minto had quite a number of advisers who held that the Indian Government was the inheritor of the absolute powers of the Great Moghul and what the British Parliament expects its representatives in India to do was to give this despotism a constitutional procedure. Morley did not countenance these constructions and suggestions. For him a progressive democratization was the only course which events in India could legitimately take, though he would try his best to steady the course as much as possible.

In fairness to Morley it must be recognized that in addition to the powerful obstacle of the European and official blocks in India, the non-official public opinion in England, even in the Liberal party, had not been sufficiently educated and oriented in respect of Indian self-government. What Gokhale was doing in this direction, in India as well as in England, was, therefore, of the utmost value for the success of even the limited plans which Morley envisaged. Reactionary officials occasionally expressed strong resentment against the close contacts maintained by Morley, and to a certain extent also by Minto, with Gokhale. Speaking of one such attempt Morley<sup>1</sup> wrote to Minto. "I have an invincible faith in what Mathew Arnold called 'sweet reasonableness.' Sir Charles Elliott, former Lieut.-Governor of Bengal, abhors the idea of holding any communion with Gokhale until he has openly and formally denounced the extremist press. As if it were of no importance or advantage to us to be on terms with men like Gokhale!" Minto, who had more normal and frequent occasions to meet Gokhale, however, never ceased to regret that certain members of the British Parliament allowed themselves to be influenced more by men like Gokhale than by men on the spot, that is, by the Viceroy and the bureaucracy.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note 1 on p. xxxi

*Minto's Impatience with Parliament*

On this note of dissatisfaction with the British Parliament, Minto allowed himself to be carried to the point of challenging the propriety of Parliamentary intervention in Indian affairs, and of prophesying an end to British rule in India if the Parliament continues to evince any active or positive interest in the conduct of Indian Government. Writing to Morley, early in 1908, he<sup>1</sup> says :

I am quite ready to join in admiration of British Parliamentary history, but the modern House of Commons is absolutely incapable of understanding Indian humanity, and the influences of many creeds and traditions, and is to my mind perhaps the greatest danger to the continuance of our rule in this country.

And he further added :

When you say that if Reforms do not save the Raj nothing else will, I am afraid I must utterly disagree. The Raj will not disappear in India as long as the British race remains what it is because we shall fight for the Raj as hard as we have ever fought, if it comes to fighting, and we shall win as we have always won. My great object is that it shall not come to that. But it may do so, and if it does it will not be our fault here. It will be because the conditions of India and the characteristics of its population are not understood at home.

Minto, a well-intentioned man no doubt, was all the while vacillating between the progressive proddings of Morley helped by Gokhale, and the reactionary and defiant pressures of British bureaucracy and their supporters. For this somewhat bellicose declaration on his part Morley could only respond by his testimony to the sense of responsibility shown by members of Parliament, even by the Radicals among them, and he<sup>2</sup> added :

"So when you say that the modern House of Commons is 'Perhaps the greatest danger to the continuance of our rule in India' I cannot for the life of me discover any evidence so far for any proposition of that formidable kind — quite the contrary." As regards Minto's claim to a free hand for the men on the spot, Morley had just to point out that : "This notion of the free-hand is really against both letter and spirit of law and constitution."

For Gokhale's plans of securing the maximum political reform in the shortest possible period he had a willing ally in Morley, though even his vision and capacity were restricted in several ways. For Minto it was easier to appreciate the bureaucratic rather than the Indian, or the British Parliamentary viewpoint as represented in a series of communications by Morley. Gokhale was often in the difficult and unenviable position of having to advise both Minto and Morley in their respective programmes of immediate action. In these situations Gokhale had not only to keep out of consideration his own long term perspectives and goals to which he gave free expression in his own

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note 2 on p. xxxj.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note 1 on p. xxxi.

public as well as private utterances, but he had often to give advice on differing approaches to the same problem adopted by Minto and Morley. This was bound to give rise to occasional misunderstandings of his position both among official and non-official circles

### *Mohamedan Representation*

A very glaring case of such misunderstanding arose in connection with a note on reforms (pp 287-90) submitted to Morley in September, 1908. The broad outlines of this note were in keeping with Gokhale's ideas on the subject to which he had given public expression on several occasions. An expansion of the Central and Provincial Councils, elected majority in the latter, and non-official majority in the former, inclusion of Indians in Executive Councils, powers of discussion and of moving of resolutions on the budget, right of moving resolutions on all items of public importance, provision of a veto to the Governors in provincial, and to the Governor-General in both central and provincial matters, and a reform of the district administration were some of the important features of Gokhale's own proposals. On the question of separate elections for Mohamedans, a point of agreement had not been reached. Gokhale's personal view of the subject was, as he had made clear on several occasions, that elections should be held by the general body of voters for all the elective seats. If any strong sense of exclusion existed among the Mohamedan voters because of their having been able to put into the legislature a smaller number of members than what by their proportionate strength in the population they were entitled to, supplementary elections for the requisite number of seats should be held through the voters of that community. Such an arrangement was feasible in the immediate context, as a certain number of nominated seats were still available. Moreover, as the role of the legislators was to be only a representative and largely advisory one a few numbers on one side or the other did not matter. It appears that initially the Government of India was favourable to this idea, but Morley in presenting his proposals to Parliament outlined a new scheme of his own which bore no resemblance to Gokhale's ideas. Some critics of his felt this to be an evidence of what they called Hindu Intrigue in London. It was to repudiate this charge on that Gokhale had to explain the full circumstances in a *Letter to The Times* (pp 304-06).

odds. Taking all these circumstances into account, Gokhale has given an overall assessment of the subject in this important speech.

Over the greater part of India the two communities had inherited a tradition of antagonism, which, though it might ordinarily lie dormant, broke forth into activity at the smallest provocation. It was that tradition which had to be overcome. . . . Spread of education, a wide and efficient performance of civic duties, growth of national aspirations and a quickening of national self-respect in both communities were among the forces which would ultimately overcome the tradition.

In the best interest of their public life and for the future of their land, they must first have elections on a territorial basis in which all communities without distinction of race or creed should participate and then special supplementary elections should be held to secure the fair and adequate representation of such important minorities as had received less than their full share in the general elections.

The Government of India's original proposals had been very much on these lines, proportionate representation for the Mohamedans, partly through general, and partly through special, electorates. The Secretary of State, however, having proposed, from the highest motives, as they could all see, a scheme of his own and having afterwards found it necessary to abandon it and fall back on the Government of India's proposals, did so in language which opened the door to large demands by the Moslem League (both special electorates and weightage).

When any one urged that his community was specially important and should, therefore, receive representation in excess of its fair share, the undoubted and irresistible implication was that the other communities were comparatively inferior and should receive less than their fair share. That was a position to which naturally the other communities could not assent.

### *Legislative Reform*

Representation of minorities was only one, among several important aspects, of constitutional reform in which Gokhale failed to carry conviction either to the Government of India or to the Secretary of State. In his note submitted to Morley (pp. 287-90), Gokhale had urged the formation of budget committees of the legislature both at the centre and in the provinces. His own experience of budget discussions had convinced him by then that speeches made by a few members on the non-official side after a budget is formally presented by Government is not the best way to seek to influence budgetary action in the interests of the people. If while the budget is in the process of preparation, and in any case before it is put to the vote, non-official representatives could sit with the officials and discuss their views on policy as well as its implementation in detail, the extent and timeliness of non-official influence may be enhanced. Incidentally, this procedure may help to train non-official members in the responsibilities connected with public revenue and expenditure.



Gokhale did not find it easy to persuade his colleagues to adopt an attitude of co operation towards a scheme of reforms with which he himself was not in complete agreement. Speaking on the subject at the (1908) Madras session of the Congress (pp 291-99), he explained why he thought that in spite of the limitations of the scheme a policy of grateful appreciation was justified. Taking the reform of the Councils and the further reforms which may come as a result of the Decentralization Commission together, he felt that a substantial advance would be made. It was, in his opinion, not reasonable at that stage of the progress of our national movement to expect effective control over either legislation or administration. He felt, however, that the new reforms provided for what he called "responsive association from within." This would ensure preventive influence over undesirable legislation. A constant attitude of antagonism would produce no constructive results. Even the ultimate veto of the Governor or the Governor-General could be rendered ineffective by a tradition of responsible association among official and non official members. In this respect the appointment of Indian members to the Secretary of State's Council, and to the Executive Councils of the Viceroy and Governors had a special relevance. Further progress towards a fuller sharing of powers can only be made through a wholehearted and competent discharge of the limited responsibilities and powers conferred on them.

### *Indians in South Africa*

During these eventful years there was only one subject for which Gokhale allowed his concentration on Reforms to be partially diverted. That subject was the one for which he held himself almost completely at the disposal of Gandhi to act in support of Indians in South Africa. In a public meeting held in Bombay in September, 1909 (pp 409-16), Gokhale regretted that racial discrimination against Indians should continue to be imposed in a Crown Colony, Transvaal, in spite of the strong opinion expressed against it both in India and in South Africa. He wholeheartedly supported Gandhi in his stand, and in particular in his campaign of passive resistance, against which so much criticism was offered, even by some of his usual supporters. The following passage from Gokhale's speech brings out his complete understanding with Gandhi, and, what is more significant, his acceptance of passive resistance when all other means have proved ineffective.

In fighting for the principle that no humiliating disabilities shall be imposed by the statute book of a British Colony on Indians as Indians. Mr. Gandhi is fighting for the assertion of our claim to that equality with which our hopes for the future are bound up. I have heard it said by some friends, mainly Englishmen, that though they originally sympathized with the Indians in this struggle Mr. Gandhi's resort to Passive Resistance, involving as it does defiance of the laws of the Colony, has alienated their sympathies. Now I do not in the first place think that this is quite a fact, for we see the Committee in England, presided over by Lord Amphill, backing up the

passive resisters as strongly and as cordially as ever. Again even if a few Englishmen have grown cold in their sympathies, I am sure none of us here feels anything but the highest admiration for the manner in which the struggle has been carried on by our side. I think, and I say this deliberately, that in the circumstances of the Transvaal, Passive Resistance, such as that organized by Mr. Gandhi, is not only legitimate, but is a duty resting on all self-respecting persons. What is this Passive Resistance? Passive Resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure is a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to suffer the penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly and clearly and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of law, and there is no other way to obtain redress, I think refusal to acquiesce in it, taking the consequences of such refusal, is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material and immediate interests.

On the South African question Gokhale and Gandhi agreed that the issue and the time both justified resort to Passive Resistance. It is conceivable that he may not have agreed either with Gandhi or some one else as to the propriety of adopting Passive Resistance in respect of some other issue or at some other time. But that in Gokhale's armoury of the weapons of constitutional agitation Passive Resistance occupied a place reserved for readily usable items cannot be denied. The moral which Gokhale drew from the plighy of Indians in South Africa was :

The root of our present troubles in the colonies really lies in the fact that our status is not what it should be in our own country. Men, who have no satisfactory status in their own land, cannot expect to have satisfactory status elsewhere.

### *Passive Resistance*

That Gokhale's acceptance of passive resistance as a legitimate method of a citizen's political action in appropriate conditions was a conclusion arrived at after mature thought is further borne out by his remarks on the subject when the situation in Transvaal was under discussion at the Lahore Congress (pp.417-25). Gokhale in moving for adoption of the relevant resolution said :

Our appeal to our own countrymen is this : a small colony in Transvaal is doing its duty in the matter. (Improvement in the conditions of indentured labour). It has done nothing unworthy but everything worthy. It is engaged in what is known as the passive resistance struggle. What is the passive resistance struggle? It is essentially defensive in its nature and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons. A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul force against brute force; he pits the divine in man against the brute in man; he pits suffering against oppression; he pits conscience against might; he pits faith against injustice; right against wrong. A passive resister

deliberately and openly violates the requirements of an unjust law or order for the simple reason that he cannot conscientiously submit to that law or order. He does not seek to evade the consequences of that law but invites them and he glories in them. It is a spiritual struggle essentially in keeping with the highest traditions of Indian spirituality. I repeat that our countrymen have done nothing unworthy. On the contrary, everything that they have done is worthy of them.

All through his active political life since 1899 Gokhale was tilting his lance of reason — be it in the shape of sweet reasonableness — against the armed might, the brute force, of the bureaucracy. Even if he could he would not, as a civilized and conscientious human being, easily bring himself to pitting his own brute force against bureaucratic brute force. But by this time, his contact with Gandhi and the progress of the just struggle of Indian settlers in South Africa under the latter's leadership, had shown to him the existence of a political weapon even more potent than reason in dealing with brute force. The mass support, the discipline and sacrifice, and selfless yet competent leadership, such as that of Gandhi, may not be forthcoming on every issue, however just it may be. But if a vicious system refused to bend under normal pressure of political agitation, for Gokhale, "passive resistance is not only legitimate, but it is a duty."

### *Performance of Reformed Councils*

It was a great irony of history that the very first measure presented before the Reformed Indian Legislature, early in 1910, was a Bill authorizing Government to demand security from Presses and Papers, and to confiscate their properties at its discretion, as a preventive deterrent to sedition. As was to be expected, Gokhale raised his powerful voice to oppose the Bill in all its stages, and to mitigate the rigours of the proposed legislation he moved several amendments (pp. 59-74). He placed the main responsibility for such sedition as found its way into the columns of the Indian press on the provocative writings in the Anglo-Indian press, which were widely believed to be inspired by official informants and mentors. He held, along with the Viceroy Lord Minto, that there was a general improvement in the political atmosphere of the country, and that such few outrages as still disfigured the scene were outbreaks of plots laid long ago. Gokhale had to regret his somewhat compromising attitude to this Bill from his place in the Council only the next year. But at the time when the Press Bill came up for consideration, the real issue before him was to stand by the new Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Mr. Sinha who had earlier offered to resign because of his disapproval of the Government's measure.

Gokhale felt that the nature of responsibility within the Executive Council is such that the new Indian Member ought not to resign, even if he disagreed on a particular issue. In any case Gokhale felt that such action on the part of the first Indian Member so soon after his appointment would bring into jeopardy the whole policy of Indianization in places of high responsibility. To facilitate

acceptance of this position by Sinha, Gokhale on his part contented himself with a strongly critical speech and abstention from voting. The Viceroy utilized this occasion of non-official support to the Press Bill to announce the withdrawal of deportation orders on Lajpat Rai and others. For Gokhale this was unexpected, as he had privately suggested to Minto a deputation of non-official members as a suitable occasion for that announcement. Minto thought that acceptance of Gokhale's suggestion would look like a submission to popular pressure. And this he wanted to avoid. It is possible that the political calculus behind Gokhale's decision not to oppose the Bill would evoke some comment and criticism. It is equally clear however, that Gokhale was judging the Bill not in the perspective of its contents, but in that of total and long term effects of his behaviour on the occasion. The general reaction within the country to Gokhale's attitude towards the Press Bill was naturally unfavourable. This was not unexpected, and, therefore, for Gokhale it was a calculated cost. But when in the implementation of the Act he later found the bureaucracy discarding all restraint, he genuinely regretted even the negative support which he and some of his friends had given to this measure.

#### *Inevitability of Further Political Reform*

Both by the way in which the Press Act was administered and by the attitude generally of officers towards the new changes brought about by the Morley-Minto Reforms, Gokhale felt considerably disturbed. While he recognized the good intentions of both, Morley and Minto, and also generally the conciliatory approach of the latter he was frank in making his dissatisfaction with the actual implementation of reforms known to friends in India and in U. K. The moral which he was free to draw from this situation was that unless the scope of reforms was considerably enlarged so as to place the elected Indian element in a position of effective influence, and not merely of "responsible association from within," the real purpose of the reforms and the needs of progressive government will not be met. Morley who knew Gokhale better and who had a broader background as a political philosopher was probably not surprised at Gokhale's frustrations at the actual results of the reforms. But Viceroy Minto looked upon this attitude of Gokhale as worse than disappointing. On being informed by Morley of a letter written by Gokhale to a mutual friend in U. K. complaining about the generally hostile reaction to reforms on the part of Europeans and officials, Minto<sup>1</sup> wrote back as follows:

"I am glad you sent me the extract from Gokhale's letter to his friend in England. It is very important as showing his hand, I am sorry to say. I can only call it mischievous, and written with the intention to mislead. Gokhale would not have spoken in the same sense to me. And that is the worst of him, that one cannot rely upon his absolute good faith. I know him well, admire him much, and am on most friendly terms with him. In ability and breadth of view he is a long way ahead of any Indian in political life. But he must know quite well that the picture he gave in

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note 2 on p. xxxi.

his letter is not a true one. Our repressive measures are certainly not severe and the suggestion that they will be hardly used is unjustifiable. The tendency of Local Governments will be generally the other way. Then the suggestion that the official world is opposed to reforms and advance is quite untrue. There has been an extraordinary change in that direction. No doubt the reforms were originally unpopular generally with the bureaucracy, but the people who do not recognize their value now are very few and far between.... But the worst symptom in what Gokhale writes is that he apparently does not mean to accept the Reforms with the goodwill which is so important for their success. If he goes on the lines of at once picking holes in it and asking for further alterations, he will make a great mistake in a patriotic sense. After all Gokhale represents a very small minority in India but it is a dangerous minority in that undue weight is attached to its views.

The British Parliamentary perspective of the Liberal statesman, Morley, was, however, different from this Olympic pronouncement of the Viceroy of India. Morley,<sup>1</sup> writing to Minto around the same time, revising the system of administration which the two had to work together for five years, observed,

It is a terribly cumbrous and artificial sort of system, and I am not certain that it will last for ever, or even for many years to come. I suspect that you surmise the same,

The period, that followed the Reforms of 1909, was not a happy one for Gokhale. While he was prepared in good faith to accept small steps forward towards an accepted goal he was not content to swallow without a protest a malingering and disruptive attitude on the part of those who were charged with the responsibility of honest implementation of reform measures. As far as it was consistent with his essentially dedicated and hopeful outlook on his responsibilities towards the country, Gokhale felt continuously frustrated ever since. It was with great difficulty that he was trying to persuade the Indian leaders, within and without the Congress, to work the Reforms as an important step towards the realization of a higher nationhood. He received poor support for this appeal from the performance of officials who in fact pursued their attempts at suppression of the political movement and at dividing the ranks of Indian politicians with even greater determination than before.

#### *Enlightened Loyalty and Limited Co-operation*

Within the Supreme Legislative Council itself, little improvement was visible in the Government's attitude towards legitimate political activity among the people and towards their political aspirations. The Press Act of 1910 was followed by the Seditious Meeting Bill of 1911, intended to be put on the Statute Book as a permanent measure. The speech which Gokhale made (pp 47-58) in opposing this measure is significant in two respects. He restated his position on the theme of loyalty to Government and clearly indicated the limits within which Government in India were entitled to expect the co-operation of their subjects.

<sup>1</sup> See foot note 1 on p xxxi.

Just as the right of free speech is an abstract right so also the proposition that all loyal citizens must rally round the executive in maintaining law and order is an abstract proposition, and its value as a guide to political conduct must depend upon the circumstances amidst which it is sought to be applied.

And then,

after a great deal of consideration, I have come to the conclusion that while things are as they are today, our co-operation with Government cannot ordinarily go beyond two classes of measures—constructive measures taken for the moral and material well-being of the people and measures urgently and immediately necessary to deal with actual or threatened disturbances.

This mood of sullen dissatisfaction was further strengthened by happenings in South Africa. His emphasis on racial equality within the Empire, and his spiritual as well as political involvement in Gandhi's activities in the Transvaal occupied a much larger part of Gokhale's thinking than was or is generally recognized. His visit to South Africa, in 1912, was a crucial event in the formulation, confirmation and progress of his political thinking. The parting appeal which he made to Indians in Pretoria on Nov. 15, 1912 (pp.435-41) gives us an inkling of the sharpening of his reactions to the entrenched positions of the vested interests in the British Empire :

You have by no means an easy position here, and it is not impossible that it may even grow worse. But, whatever happens, do not lose faith or give way to despair. I pray to God that such a struggle as you found it necessary to wage in the Transvaal during the last three years may not have to be waged again. But if it has to be resumed, or if you have to enter struggles of a like nature for justice denied or injustice forced on you, remember that the issue will largely turn on the character you show, on your capacity for combined action, on your readiness to suffer and sacrifice in a just cause.

Soon after his return from South Africa Gokhale attended the annual session of the Congress held in Bankipur. Jawaharlal Nehru,<sup>1</sup> who also was present, found that "Gokhale, fresh from South Africa, was the outstanding person of the session. He seemed to be one of the few persons present who took politics and public affairs seriously and felt deeply about them. I was impressed by him." The main interest in politics for Gokhale after this date lay mainly in organizing the political life of the country on stronger and more cohesive lines. The work within the legislature did not by any means exhaust his capacity to be of use to his countrymen. He had accepted membership of the Royal Commission on Public Services in India on account of his life-long interest in the process of Indianization. Largely owing to his failing health he was not able to do as much for the Commission as he would otherwise have done. In fact when he passed away, in February 1915, this Commission

<sup>1</sup> J. NEHRU — *Autobiography*, p. 27.

had still to submit its report. He had, however, occasion, on account of this Commission, twice to visit England. During these visits he was able on a more direct basis to exchange ideas with friends of India in that country on the need and form of an early advance of further political reform. Strength and unity of political life in India, and an active support for Indian self government in U.K. were the two most engrossing interests of Gokhale during these years.

### *Post-War Reforms*

The War, which commenced in August, 1914, came as an altogether new factor in the situation. It soon became clear that not only tranquility in India but its active and wholehearted support would be needed to help Great Britain and its allies to win ultimate success in the struggle. This realization was, however, gradual and in fact, it fluctuated with the fortunes of British arms from time to time. Early in the days of the War the full implications of its lasting effects were not known. Gokhale, who was nursing a serious ailment within himself, was under a special difficulty to appraise the full implications of the situation, internal and international and, to organize suitable action. It was mostly from his sick bed that he was attending as a matter of duty to all affairs which came before him.

It was in the course of such a restricted routine that towards the middle of January, 1915 he was asked by Lord Willingdon, the then Governor of Bombay, to discuss with him the subject of further political reform for India. So far as Lord Willingdon himself was concerned, the initiative with the Government of India was to be his own. To secure fuller Indian support to the War effort he felt that a declaration of further reforms was called for. Knowing the limitations of Lord Willingdon and having no more than the first six months of the War behind him, what he would be justified in suggesting to the authorities at Simla and London was the question. Due to illness Gokhale could not succeed in arranging a meeting with two of his colleagues, Pherozeshah Mehta and the Aga Khan whom he occasionally consulted on such matters. Being pressed by Willingdon Gokhale pencilled a draft for his use (pp 313-17). This was to have been discussed with Mehta and the Aga Khan before dispatch. Mehta did not obviously reply, and the Aga Khan only wrote back suggesting the addition of a clause regarding German East Africa, which he felt should be turned over to India after the War, for colonization by Indians. As will be seen from the scheme as it appears in this volume, this clause was in fact added at the end.

This, however, proved to be the end of Gokhale's own activity in politics, as almost on the morrow of the dispatch of the draft he breathed his last. It is important to note these circumstances attending the draft on post war reforms in India to make it clear, firstly that it did not represent Gokhale's own considered and complete views about a long term solution of India's constitutional needs, and, secondly, that it was in no sense a testament which he addressed to his own people. The draft contained a set of proposals which,

in the opinion of Gokhale, Lord Willingdon could on his own press on the Government of India as a war measure. This draft would in all probability have remained buried in the official archives of Government, but for its publication by the Aga Khan in 1917, fully two years after it was first prepared. The Aga Khan was led on to do this because Mr. Jinnah earlier had, in his presidential address to the Provincial Conference held at Ahmedabad, outlined a scheme of Provincial autonomy which was strikingly similar to the contents of Gokhale's draft.

### *Organizing Freedom for Prosperity*

If there is any such thing as a political testament of Gokhale for his people, it will have to be sought in no single one of his writings and speeches. In all his contributions from, say, 1905, there are a number of basic concepts about a desirable political life for the people of this country. These concepts form a consistent whole of a broader life of freedom and prosperity which is the goal of political activity. Like all true lovers of freedom, Gokhale realized that important as politics is, it is by no means the only important thing in the legitimate interests of a civilized society. A variety of industrial, social and cultural associations freely and usefully operating in their respective spheres of interest must be considered to be equally necessary and important. For this reason an atmosphere and tradition of social equality and cultural freedom for all citizens in a community is essential to secure the maximum benefit out of a system of political equality and freedom. What Gokhale had to say about the evils of repression, and about the inherent value of freedom of association, meeting and expression, has universal and permanent validity.

All governments, irrespective of their outward forms, are tempted to assume executive powers over their subjects as a short cut to easy suppression of all sources of opposition. The fact that these powers are conferred on the executive by the Legislatures of the day does not take away from the fact that executive restrictions narrow the base of that free association among citizens, on which the superstructure of constitutional government rests. Especially if the controlling power in the legislature is held by a strong power group, which is for the time being securely entrenched, the risk of executive high-handedness covered with a legal cloak is all the greater. Freedom-loving citizens and their representatives have the duty to see that legal freedoms and ordinary processes of law are not denied to any citizen either by extraordinary legislation or by extraordinary procedures.

When Gokhale commenced his political life not a single member of a Legislative Council was elected in the true sense of the word. An election had to be followed by a confirmatory nomination by Government. The number of even such members was almost negligible in a legislative body of the size of a modern cabinet in many state Governments, and much smaller than the number of ministers in the Central Government of India. The Morley-Minto Councils, which owed so much to the initiative and suggestion of Gokhale, were the



last stage of political reform with which he was associated. These councils lacked effective power either in the making or in the execution of laws. Except that the first World War, which had just commenced when he died, appeared to introduce a new unforeseen element in the situation, the power of Britain and its grip over dependent areas appeared to be unchallengeable. Against such a background Gokhale could concentrate only on small and immediate but necessary and difficult tasks. Even in these, more often than not, his generation could serve the country more by its failures than by its successes. Fortunately that stage is now left behind. Even the generation to whom it was given to put up the last and the successful struggle against foreign domination has well nigh passed out. For the political problems of the present generation, therefore, Gokhale's Writings and Speeches are useful as guides not so much on the variable detail, as on the fundamental principles of political organization in our country.

### *Indian Unity*

It was difficult to imagine a greater supporter of India's unity than Gokhale. Territorially, as well as demographically, for him India was one. Following Ranade, Gokhale saw in the British and pre-British history of India a continuous thread of intermingling of peoples and cultures from which a stronger and healthier bond of national unity would emerge, if only people knew how to utilize it. As important as unity was, however, the diversity of the country and of the people. Unity and diversity could not be simultaneously sustained except by incorporating them within the political structure in a suitable form. As far as can be derived from his words, Gokhale anticipated that in the natural course of political evolution the British Parliamentary control of Indian affairs would be withdrawn and the office of the Secretary of State for India would be merged with that of the Colonial Secretary for the maintenance of constitutional relation of a self governing India with the Crown. Within India, Gokhale believed in reconstructing the whole edifice of administration on the principle of decentralization.

From the village panchayat upwards each district would have as much of self-contained and democratic government as was consistent with due regard to the functions of government and to the availability of the means of discharging them most efficiently. Even in respect of such matters of local administration as had to be left to the final authority of the Provincial or national governments, Gokhale expected the local representatives of these more central authorities to seek advice from the representatives of the people in each district. The government of each constituent province should have full authority for administering all subjects of internal administration. The Central Government should have exclusive responsibility for only such functions as have primarily an all-India application, such as defence, foreign relations, currency and external trade. But over the rest of the field of predominantly internal interest, Gokhale would give to the All India Government only certain reserve of powers which

would ensure that any serious flaws in the governments of the provinces would be corrected in time.

### *Limited Parliamentary Government*

As for the relationship of the Executive with the Legislative branch of government, Gokhale does not approve of the prevailing British model which was installed by the self-governing colonies of the Empire. He did not contemplate that the heads of State would be just constitutional heads with no ruling functions. While administration would be directed by minister-level functionaries appointed by governors, they would not be necessarily removable by a majority in the legislatures. The influence of the legislature would be indirect. Fresh taxation could not be levied without the support of the legislature. Ordinary legislation would, of course, be subject to the sanction of the legislatures, but powers of veto, and in certain cases powers of issuing ordinances, would be vested in the heads of State. As Gokhale has specifically stated in one or two places, he visualized the role of legislatures in India to be nearer that of the Reichstag in the Germany of his days than that of the Parliament in Britain. If a new description is to be found for such a system in which the legislature has effective influence but no automatic control, it would be "limited parliamentary government," on the analogy of "limited monarchy."

It appears that, though not as a substitute for direct election by individual voters, but as a supplement to such elections, Gokhale favoured group elections by special electorates, such as Universities, Chambers of Industry and Commerce, big landowners and Municipalities. The particular associations or bodies which would constitute an appropriate group for such elections would vary with time and circumstance. When the legislative councils were in their very infancy it was too early to think in terms of a second chamber either in the provinces or at the centre. Gokhale naturally makes no reference to this item. The question, therefore, as to whether the election by particular interests or groups which he favours has a special reference to either the lower or the higher chambers, or to both, will have to remain a moot one.

### *Political Education*

Apart from the structure and policy of Government, Gokhale attached special importance to certain aspects of active political interest on the part of the citizens themselves. By far the most important need in this respect is the provision of facilities for the systematic and careful study of public questions by citizens generally, and in particular by those who assume representative or official responsibilities. In his own day, he was almost the only member on the non-official side of the legislature who devoted himself to a study of important public questions. It cannot be claimed that he studied all public questions. Finance, governmental structure, status of Indians within the Empire and education were subjects which ranked high in the attention which Gokhale bestowed on them. But in any normal system of popular government,

unless a large number of citizens, and certainly all those who, either in an official or a non-official capacity, have to attend to public affairs make it a point to study the questions in which they are interested, processes of popular government would not be made to function intelligently and fruitfully. The wider the scope of the franchise, and the greater the responsibilities assumed by governmental bodies, the greater would be the need for a systematic study of public questions. Contributions of public men, in or out of office, would be valuable in proportion to the study that has gone into their formulation.

It does not appear that Gokhale would have been content with a single Society of Servants of India established by him at Poona. Both during the days of struggle and organization for the attainment of the status of a self-governing nation and also for the current operation of a democratic State, when one was established, there was need for suitable institutions of devoted public servants, who would make it their life's mission to study selected subjects of public importance and to help in organizing and guiding public activity. Pluralism, both within the sphere of government and outside, and a general decentralization of social organization were favoured by Gokhale.

The tasks prescribed for members under the Constitution of the Servants of India Society (pp 181-86) are really the essential purposes for which political workers must continue to exert themselves at all times. Patriotism, national service, communal harmony, spread of education, industrial development, and elevation of the handicapped sections of the community are at least as important at present as they were at any time before. In fact the hazards of a free life for a developing country make the importance and urgency of these tasks even greater. By the analogy of Japan what Gokhale said in his presidential address at the Banaras Congress (pp 187-209) is specially apt at the present stage of our existence.

*India needs today above everything else that the gospel of this devotion (to motherland) should be preached to high and low, to prince and to peasant, in town and in hamlet, till the service of motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan.*

The following passage from his speech which he delivered in Allahabad, under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru, may well be treated as the theme in support of which all his political speeches and writings were made.

Every one must recognize that their main work is to build up the strength of our people. That work, roughly speaking, is threefold. First, the promotion of a closer union among the different sections of the Indian community — between the Hindus and Mohamedans — and among the different sections of the Hindus themselves, secondly, the development of a stronger and higher type of character, firm of purpose and disciplined in action, and, thirdly, the cultivation of an intense feeling of nationality throughout the country rising superior to caste and creed and rejoicing in all sacrifice for the motherland, accompanied by a spread of political education among the masses (pp 219-20).

## IMPORTANT EVENTS IN GOKHALE'S LIFE

- 1866, May 9 Birth at Kotluk (Ratnagiri District).
- 1876 Migration to Kolhapur for education.
- 1881 Passed matriculation examination.
- 1882 Studied in Rajaram College, Kolhapur.
- 1883 Studied in Deccan College, Poona.
- 1884 Graduated from Elphinstone College, Bombay; and joined the Law Class.
- 1885 Joined New English School, Poona (started in 1880), as a teacher.
- 1886 Became a Life-member of the Deccan Education Society, Poona (founded on Oct. 24, 1884), and began teaching in Fergusson College.  
Introduced to Ranade.
- 1888 Elected Secretary, Bombay Provincial Conference.  
Edited English columns of the *Sudharak*.
- 1889 First participation in the National Congress.
- 1890 Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and Editor of its Quarterly.
- 1892 Appointed Secretary of the Deccan Education Society.
- 1895 Worked as Secretary to the Reception Committee of the National Congress which met at Poona.  
Elected Fellow, Bombay University.
- 1896 Resigned Secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha and helped in starting the Deccan Sabha, of which he became the first secretary.  
First meeting with Gandhiji.
- 1897 First visit to England for giving evidence before the Welby Commission.  
Apology incident.
- 1898 Organized plague relief measures at Poona.
- 1899 Elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council.
- 1901 Elected member of the Imperial Legislative Council.
- 1902 Went on furlough from Fergusson College.  
Elected President, Poona Municipality.
- 1903 Elected additional Joint General Secretary to the National Congress.
- 1904 Made C.I.E.  
'Formally retired from Fergusson College.'
- 1905 Founded the Servants of India Society (on June 12).  
Second visit to England as a Congress delegate to represent India's case in view of the impending British General Election.  
Presided over the National Congress at Banaras.

1906	}	Third and fourth visits to England to agitate for the prospective reforms
1908		
1907		Lecturing tour in Northern India
1908		Gave evidence before the Decentralization Commission
1910		<i>Inauguration of the Ranade Industrial and Economic Institute</i>
1912		Visit to South Africa
		Appointed member of the Public Services Commission
1912, 1913 and 1914	}	Fifth sixth and seventh visits to England in connection with the work of the Public Services Commission
1913		
		Organized financial assistance for the Indian struggle in South Africa
1914		<i>Declined offer of K C I E</i>
		Attempted a Congress compromise
1915, Feb 19		Death at Poona

PART I  
COUNCIL SPEECHES

## INDIAN WORKS OF DEFENCE

*On Friday, 20th February 1903, Sir Edmond Elles, the Military Member, moved in the Imperial Legislative Council that the Bill to provide for imposing restrictions upon land in the vicinity of works of defence in order that such land may be kept free from buildings and other obstructions be referred to a Select Committee which included Gokhale. The Select Committee's report came up for consideration on Friday, 20th March 1903, when Gokhale made the following speech*

### *Advance Notice to Occupier Essential*

My Lord, I desire to say just one word about this Bill before it is passed into law. In signing the Report of the Select Committee, I appended a few observations of dissent in regard to the provision introduced by the Committee for cases of emergency. My position was this—under the Bill as originally drafted, fourteen days' previous notice was obligatory in all cases—emergent as well as ordinary—before a house could be entered and demolished. Now it was felt that though such notice was sufficient to enable the occupier to remove his family and moveable property to another place before the demolition of his house, there was no justification in ordinary cases for Government claiming the power to demolish a building and practically destroying all trace of it before the amount of compensation was determined. And Government have recognized the force of this objection by modifying the original provision as far as it was applicable to ordinary cases, and the Bill, as amended by the Committee, requires the amount of compensation to be determined by the Collector before demolition can take place. But while the original provision has thus been made more liberal and reasonable in ordinary cases, it has at the same time been made more stringent in cases of emergency where the fourteen days' notice as originally contemplated has now been dropped. And my contention was that, if the framers of the Bill were at one time satisfied that there was no objection to providing a fortnight's notice even in cases of emergency, no fresh reasons were adduced for doing away entirely with the notice in the amended Bill. I think, my Lord, that even in cases of emergency it ought to be possible for the Military authorities to give some notice to the occupier before he is turned out bag and baggage and his house demolished. For even under the amended Bill the previous sanction of the Governor-General has to be obtained and a notification in the local *Government Gazette* issued before demolition can take place; and these steps would surely take some time, and if the emergency can wait for these preliminary steps being taken, surely it may also admit of a few hours' previous notice being given to the occupier. However, I recognize that it is extremely difficult and may sometimes prove extremely inconvenient to provide in express terms any particular period of notice as obligatory in all cases of emergency, and I have therefore refrained from moving any amendment on

the present occasion. But I earnestly trust that in the rules which Government will frame under this Act, as in any general instructions which they may issue to the Military authorities in the matter, care will be taken to ensure the giving of some previous notice to an occupier before he is turned out of his house in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act. With these few words I support the motion that the Bill, as amended by the Select Committee, be passed.

[The motion was put and agreed to.]



country ranges from the highest concerns of State policy which engage the attention of the Viceroy down to the pettiest detail of the routine work of a village official. The word 'secret' is nowhere defined, and it must, therefore, include all official information not authoritatively notified by the Government to the public. And I want to know if it is seriously intended to make the publication of even the most trivial news in connection with this vast Civil administration of the country penal—such news, for instance, as the transfer of a Government officer from one place to another—unless it has first appeared in a Government resolution or any other official notification. And yet this would be the effect of the proposed amendment. The *Englishman* calls this Russianizing the administration, and he is entitled to the thanks of the public for his powerful criticism which is also disinterested. For the Bill, even if it becomes law, will not in practice affect it or the other editors of Anglo-Indian papers. I would like to see the official who would venture to arrest and march to the police thana the editor of an Anglo-Indian paper. But so far as Indian editors are concerned, there are, I fear, officers in this country, who would not be sorry for an opportunity to march whole battalions of them to the police thana. It is dreadful to think of the abuse of authority which is almost certain to result from this placing of Indian editors, especially the smaller ones among them, so completely at the mercy of those whom they constantly irritate or displease by their criticism.

It might be said that, while Government have no objection to the authorised publication of official news of minor importance, they certainly want to prevent the publication of papers, such as the confidential circulars about the wider employment of Europeans and Eurasians in the Public Service, which were published by some of the Indian papers last year. Now, in the first place, the Bill does not distinguish between matters of smaller and greater importance. And, secondly, even on the higher ground on which the measure may be sought to be defended, I submit that the Bill, if passed into law, will do incalculable mischief. I think, Sir, that in a country like India, while Naval and Military secrets require to be protected, if anything, with even greater strictness than in England, the very reverse is the case with matters concerning the Civil administration. The responsibility of the Government to the people in this country is merely moral; it is not legal, as in the West. There is no machinery here, as in Western countries, to secure that the interests of the general public will not be sacrificed in favour of a class. The criticism of the Indian Press is the only outward check operating continuously upon the conduct of a bureaucracy, possessing absolute and uncontrolled power. I can understand the annoyance caused to the officers of Government by the publication of circulars, such as were made public last year. But are Government wise in permitting this feeling of annoyance to so influence them as to make them come forward with a proposal to close an obvious safety-valve and drive popular discontent inwards? The proper and only remedy, worthy of the British Government, for whatever is really deplorable in the present

state of things, is not to gag newspapers as proposed in this Bill, but to discourage the issue of confidential circulars which seek to take away in the dark what has been promised again and again in Acts of Parliaments, the Proclamations of Sovereigns, and the responsible utterances of successive Viceroys. From the standpoint of the rulers, no less than that of the ruled, it will be most unfortunate if Indian papers were thus debarred from writing about matters which agitate the Indian community most. What happened, for instance, last year, when those circulars were published? For some time before their publication the air was thick with the rumour that Government had issued orders to shut out Indians from all posts in the Railway Department, carrying a salary of Rs 30 and upwards a month. It was impossible to believe a statement of this kind, but it was not possible to contradict it effectively when it was practically on every tongue. The damage done to the prestige of Government was considerable, and it was only when the circulars were published that the exact position came to be understood. The circulars, as they stood, were bad enough in all conscience, but they were not so bad as the public had believed them to be. What was laid down in them was not that Indians were to be shut out from all appointments higher than Rs 30 a month, but that Eurasians and Europeans were to have, as far as practicable, a preference in making appointments to such posts. The fear that such lamentable departures from the avowed policy of Government might be dragged into the light of day acts at present as an effective check on the adoption of unjust measures, and I think it will have a disastrous effect on the course of administration, if this check were to be done away with and nothing better substituted in its place.

As regards the second amendment, which would make a man's merely going to an office without lawful authority or permission an offence, I am sure Government have not considered what this will mean in practice. A very large amount of the work of lower officials is transacted by the people concerned going to their offices without permission expressly obtained. Petitioners, for instance, often have to go to offices for making inquiries about what has happened to their petitions—they rarely receive written replies,—and it will now be in the power of any police officer to get a man against whom he has a grudge, or from whom he wants to extort anything into trouble by alleging that he had gone to an office of Government 'without lawful authority'. This will be putting a most dangerous power into the hands of the lower police, about whose character, as a class, the less said, the better. Even an innocent friendly visit by a private individual to an official friend of his at the latter's office can, under this Bill, be construed into an offence. I am sure nothing could be farther from the intention of Government, and I am astonished that greater care was not taken in drafting the Bill to confine it to the object Government had in view.

#### *No Amendment Can Make Bill Acceptable*

Lastly, it is proposed to make offences under this Act cognizable and

non-bailable—which means that a person charged with an offence under this Act is to be arrested at once, but he is not to be liberated on bail—and yet there is to be no trial till the sanction of the Local Government has been obtained. This may take weeks and even months, and finally, it may never be accorded, and the person arrested is all the while to rot in detention. I cannot understand how a procedure so abhorrent to ordinary notions of fairness should have commended itself to Government. The only redeeming feature in this most deplorable business is that among the opinions which the Government of India have received from their own officers, there are some that strongly deprecate the measure—at least in its more serious aspects. And I think it is a matter for special satisfaction that the Government of Bengal has spoken out so plainly against placing Civil matters on a level with the Naval and Military. Sir, I protest against the very introduction of this Bill. I protest against the spirit in which it has been conceived. I protest against its provisions generally. And as I cannot imagine any possible amendment of the measure which can make it acceptable to me, my only course is to vote against this motion to refer it to a Select Committee.

SIR EDMOND ELLES : I should like to ask the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale whether he intends to oppose the Bill in its military aspect as well as in its civil aspect because I understood him to say he would oppose the Bill altogether.

GOKHALE : Not in its military aspect.

[ The motion was put and agreed to. ]

*At a meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on Friday, the 4th March 1904, Sir Arundel Arundel<sup>1</sup> moved that the Report of the Select Committee on the Bill to amend the Indian Official Secrets Act, 1889, be taken into consideration. Gokhale then spoke as follows :*

#### *Even Amended Bill Unacceptable*

My Lord, I desire to say a few words on the Bill as amended by the Select Committee before this motion is put to the vote. When the Bill was referred to the Committee in December last, my Hon'ble friend Nawab Saiyid Muhammad<sup>2</sup> and myself deemed it our duty to enter an emphatic protest against the general character and the leading provisions of the proposed measure, because in the form in which it then stood, it was impossible to have any patience with the Bill. Since then, however, thanks to the assurances given by your Lordship on your return to Calcutta, and the conciliatory attitude adopted by the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill in the Select Committee, the Bill has been largely altered, and I gladly recognize that several most

<sup>1</sup>SIR ARUNDEL ARUNDELL, member, Viceroy's executive council (1901-05).

<sup>2</sup>NAWAB SAIYID MUHAMMAD BAHADUR (1869-1916), member, Madras and Imperial Legislative Councils; president, Indian National Congress (1913); general secretary, Indian National Congress (1915-16); champion of Hindu-Muslim unity.

objectionable features have either been wholly removed or have been greatly softened. Having made this acknowledgment, I deem it necessary, my Lord, to submit that unless the Bill is further amended on the lines of the more important amendments of which notice has been given, the alterations made so far will fail to allay the apprehensions that have been so justly aroused. My Hon'ble friends Mr Bose<sup>1</sup> and Nawab Sayid Muhammad and myself have signed the Report of the Select Committee subject to dissent only on two points, and we have expressed that dissent in the mildest terms that we could possibly find to convey our meaning. We did this both to mark our sense of the conciliatory manner in which the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill received many of our suggestions and in the hope that, by thus removing from our dissent all trace of the angry criticisms to which the Bill has been subjected, we might make it easier for Government to proceed further in the direction of meeting the objections urged by the public. My Lord, I earnestly trust that in this hope we shall not be altogether disappointed. I do not wish to anticipate anything I may have to say when the amendments of which I have given notice come up for consideration. But I cannot let this motion be put to the vote without saying that the Bill, even as amended, is open to serious objection, that no case has been made out for it, that the safeguards to which the Hon'ble Member referred in presenting the Report of the Select Committee are more or less illusory, and that unless the Bill is further amended, it must tend unduly to curtail the liberty of the Press, not so much perhaps by what Government may actually do, as by the fear of what they may do. The striking unanimity with which the entire Press of the country, Anglo-Indian as well as Indian, has condemned the measure must convince the Government that the opposition to the Bill is not of a mere partisan character, but that it is based upon reasonable grounds, which it is the duty of Government to remove. If, however, Government are not prepared to do this, I would respectfully urge even at this last moment that the Bill should be abandoned altogether.

*No Excuse for Civil Cases Being Covered*

*Mr T Morison proposed*

that in clause 2 of the amended Bill, in the proposed definition of "civil affairs", sub clause (b) be omitted

*While the amendment was under discussion Gokhale made the following observations*

I desire to say just one word in regard to what has fallen from the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill. The Hon'ble Member just now told us that the Act of 1889 was passed with the object of including civil affairs

<sup>1</sup> Mr (later Sir) Bipin Krishna Bose practised law first at Jubbulpore and then at Nagpur, one of the founders of the Morris Memorial College Nagpur, member, Famine Commission (1908), member Imperial Legislative Council (1902-05)

within its scope. We have Sir Andrew Scoble's<sup>1</sup> statement that the Act was merely a repetition of the English law passed on the same subject a year before, and in connection with the English law it was definitely stated by the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords that the Act was intended to apply to naval and military purposes only. The English law being thus intended and the Indian law being merely a repetition of the English law, I do not see how the Indian law could have been made to cover civil cases. Another point I would like to mention is that even under the law of 1889, supposing that civil affairs were included within its scope, the only thing that was made penal was the publication of information wrongfully obtained.

By introducing the word 'civil', however, in section 3, sub-section (2) [now sub-section (3)] the Government secures an advance upon that; the proposed amendment penalizes the publication of all confidential information, not merely wrongfully obtained, but no matter how it was obtained. The present Bill, therefore, does not merely make clear the intention of the Act of 1889, but goes much further than that Act.

[ The motion was put and negatived. ]

*At the same meeting Gokhale moved :*

that in clause 2 of the Bill as amended, in the proposed definition of "civil affairs", in sub-clause (b) the words "or any other matters of State" be omitted.

*Gokhale said :*

*Plea for Deletion of "Or any other matters of State"*

Government are no doubt aware that these are the words to which the greatest exception has been taken both by the Press and by public associations in the country, and if this proposal to omit them is accepted, the greater part of the opposition to this measure will, I think, disappear. On the other hand, if the words are retained, they will render the attempted definition of 'civil affairs' practically valueless, by conferring on Government almost as wide and dangerous a power to interfere with the liberty of the Press as under the original Bill. My Lord, a definition is no definition unless it specifies, or at any rate indicates with some degree of definiteness, what it is that is intended to be included within its scope, so that a person of average intelligence may have no difficulty in understanding that scope. In the present case, this test fails altogether on account of the use of such vague and all-embracing words as 'any other matters of State' in this attempted definition. I see that the Hon'ble Sir Arundel has given notice of an amendment to insert the word

<sup>1</sup>SIR ANDREW RICHARD SCOBLE, Advocate-General, Bombay; member, Bombay Legislative Council (1872-77); Legal Member, Viceroy's executive council (1886-91); member, House of Commons (1892-1900).

'important' before the words 'matters of State' 'Any other important matters of State' is, however, as vague and may be made as all embracing as the expression 'any other matters of State', and I do not think the Hon'ble Member's amendment will improve matters in any way

It may be argued, as the Hon'ble Member did when presenting the Report of the Select Committee, that the definition of 'civil affairs', even as it stands, need cause no apprehension, because, before any conviction is obtained, Government would have to prove (1) that the information published was of such a confidential nature that the public interest had suffered by its disclosure, (2) that it had been wilfully disclosed, and (3) that the person disclosing it knew that in the interest of the State he ought not to have disclosed it at that time Now, my Lord, these safeguards look very well on paper, but I fear in practice they will not be found very effective When the Government come forward to prosecute a newspaper on the ground that it had disclosed confidential information relating to matters of State, and that such disclosure had harmed public interests, I am afraid a great many Magistrates in India will require no other proof than the opinion of Government to hold that the information published was confidential, and that it had prejudicially affected the interests of the State As regards wilful communication, that too will be held to be established as a matter of course, unless the newspaper proves that the publication was due to inadvertence The knowledge on the part of the editor that such publication should not have been made at that time in the interests of the State will, no doubt, strictly speaking, be more difficult to prove, but Magistrates of the average type in India, in the peculiar relation in which they stand to the Executive Government, will not be very reluctant to presume such knowledge from the fact that the information published was regarded by Government as confidential, and from other attendant circumstances Let me take, as an illustration, the publication last year by some of the Indian newspapers of a confidential circular addressed to railway authorities in this country by the Under-Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department in the matter of the wider employment of Europeans and Eurasians My Lord, in the statement made by your Lordship in December last on the subject of the Official Secrets Bill, your Lordship was pleased to state that I had directly attributed the introduction of this Bill to the annoyance caused to Government by the publication of this circular May I respectfully ask leave to correct this misapprehension? I had mentioned this circular only to illustrate my meaning as to the distinction which I thought Government might make between civil matters of smaller and of greater importance My exact words were 'It may be said that, while Government have no objection to the unauthorized publication of official news of minor importance, they certainly want to prevent the publication of papers such as the confidential circulars about the wider employment of Europeans and Eurasians in the public service, which were published by some of the Indian papers last year' And later on, when I spoke of the annoyance caused to the officers of Govern-

ment, I spoke of 'the annoyance caused by the publication of circulars such as were made public last year.' I had thus used the circular only for the purpose of an illustration, and I beg leave to use it for a similar purpose again today. It is probable that, as this circular had been issued without your Lordship's knowledge or the knowledge of the Member in charge of Public Works, as stated by your Lordship on a previous occasion, Government would not sanction a prosecution in this case; but supposing for the sake of argument that they did, how would the matter stand? Government might urge that the publication of the circular had inflamed the minds of many Hindus, Muhammadans and Parsis against the Government and had thus led to increased disaffection in the country. And if the trying Magistrate came to accept this view, the task of the prosecution would be comparatively simple. The injury to public interests would be held to lie in the alleged increased disaffection, and the circular being confidential, the Magistrate would have no difficulty in holding that the publication was wilful; and the editor would be presumed to have known what the consequences of such a publication would be. It may be that on an appeal to the High Courts or similar authority, the conviction may be set aside. But the worry and expense caused to the editor by such a prosecution might, in themselves, prove a heavy punishment, especially when it is remembered that the prosecution would have behind it all the prestige, power and resources of the Government. Even if no prosecution were actually instituted by the Government under the proposed legislation, the mere fact that the Government was armed with the power to prosecute cannot fail to affect prejudicially the liberty of the Press in this country. My Lord, nowhere throughout the British Empire is the Government so powerful relatively to the governed as in India. Nowhere, on the other hand, is the Press so weak in influence, as it is with us. The vigilance of the Press is the only check that operates from outside, feebly, it is true, but continuously, upon the conduct of the Government, which is subject to no popular control. It is here, therefore, if anywhere, that the Legislature should show special consideration to the Press, and yet here alone it is proposed to arm Government with a greater power to control the freedom of the Press than in any other part of the Empire. My Lord, we often hear Government complaining of the distrust shown by the people in this country and of the people complaining of the Government, not trusting them enough. In such a situation, where again the question is further complicated by a tendency on the part of the Government to attach undue importance to race or class considerations, the wisest and safest and most statesmanlike course for it is to conduct its civil administration as far as possible in the light of day. The Press is, in one sense, like the Government, a custodian of public interests, and any attempt to hamper its freedom by repressive legislation is bound to affect these interests prejudicially, and cannot fail in the end to react upon the position of the Government itself. My Lord, I fear, that the retention of the words 'or any other matters of State' in the definition of 'civil affairs' will unduly curtail

the liberty of the Press in India, and I, therefore, move that these words be omitted from the definition.

### *Gokhale's Reply*

*In his reply at the same meeting to the debate on his amendment Gokhale spoke as follows*

I beg leave to say just one word with regard to what has fallen from the Hon'ble Mr Raleigh<sup>1</sup>. He said that he resented the suggestion made by me that many of the Subordinate Magistrates in this country might construe the provisions of this Act in a manner unduly favourable to the prosecution and that accused persons might not have a fair trial when the prosecution was started by the Government. All I can say is that if the Hon'ble Member will occasionally glance at the judgments of High Courts, as reported in the newspapers, and read the observations which the Judges from time to time feel themselves constrained to make on the conduct of subordinate Magistrates, he will find that there is more than justification for the fears that I have expressed.

[ On a division, 7 voted in favour and 16 against. So the motion was negatived ]

### *Urges Exclusion of " Civil " Affairs*

*At the same meeting Gokhale moved -*

that in clause 3 of the Bill as amended, in sub-clause (c) the words "and in sub section (2)" be omitted.

*Gokhale said*

The effect of this amendment would be to omit the word 'civil' from section 3, sub section (3), of the Act as now proposed to be amended and confine the provisions of the sub-section to naval and military matters as in the old Act. I quite admit that this would practically render the present Bill useless, but the only course left open to me now after the rejection of my amendment with reference to the words 'any other matters of State' is to move that the word 'civil' be taken out of section 3, sub section (2). I tried in Select Committee, as my Note of Dissent shows, to go as far with Government as it was possible for me to go. I agreed to extend the new law to the relations of Government with Foreign States, to the confidential relations of Government with Native States, and to confidential fiscal matters. But beyond that I was not prepared to go, and since Government want to define 'civil affairs' in the manner in which it has been proposed in the Bill, my only course is to propose that the word 'civil' be taken out of the sub section

[ The motion was put and negatived ]

<sup>1</sup> Legal Member, Government of India (1899-1904)



*Protection for bona fide Publication Necessary*

*At the same meeting, Gokhale said :*

The next amendment which stands in my name is really made up of two amendments, and I had thought I had given separate notices of the two amendments. As, however, they have been printed together, I move them together. I beg to move

that after clause 3 of the Bill as amended, the following be added, namely—  
“ and

(e) to sub-section (3) as so renumbered, the following exceptions shall be added, namely—

“ *Exception I*—Where the information relates to affairs affecting the relations of the Governor-General in Council with any Native State in India and the communication has been made by a newspaper, the provisions of the sub-section shall not apply, unless the information has been wrongfully obtained.

“ *Exception II*—Where the information communicated has been obtained from a newspaper published outside British India, the provisions of this sub-section shall not apply.”

The first part of the amendment refers to confidential information, about Native States being published by newspapers, to which Government might take exception. I will only point out this in this connection that whereas in regard to matters affecting the British Government in its own territory, there are only two parties, namely, the Government and the newspaper which publishes the information; in regard to matters relating to Native States there are three parties : there is the British Government, there is the Native State, and there is the newspaper concerned. In the case of affairs relating to the British Government alone, if a newspaper obtained its information from a recognized officer of the British Government in an authorized manner, there will obviously be no prosecution. In regard to Native States the information might be obtained authorizedly either from a recognized officer of the British Government or from a recognized officer belonging to the Native State ; and I submit that it is only fair that where the information has been thus obtained, *i.e.* not by wrongful means, there should be no prosecution. There are occasions on which a Native Prince finds himself entirely at the mercy of a Political Officer. This is rather a strong expression to use, but I come from a Native State, and I know how sometimes, when there is a strong and unsympathetic Political Officer, the Prince is virtually helpless in spite of whatever representations that he may make. On such occasions, if a powerful newspaper—especially an Anglo-Indian newspaper—takes up the case of the Native State and represents its side in its columns, the result often is that the attention of Government is attracted as it is not attracted by the representations of the Chief, and speedy redress is secured by the Chief, which otherwise there would be small

chance of his securing I think, therefore, that where information regarding a Native State, such as is contemplated in the definition of 'civil affairs', has not been wrongfully obtained by a newspaper, the publication should not be an offence I would further say this, it may be thought that the Native State had no business to communicate such information to the newspaper, that the matter being confidential and being between the Government of India and the Native State, the Native State divulged what it had no business or right to divulge If so, the Government might deal with the Native State separately, but the newspaper, acting in the interests of the Native State or in the interests of justice, which is even higher, should not be punished simply because the Government of India does not like the disclosures made

[ The motion was put and negatived ]

*At the same meeting Gokhale said*

My next amendment is to the following effect  
that after clause 3 of the Bill as amended, the following be added, namely .  
" and

( e ) to sub section ( 3 ) as so renumbered, the following exception shall be added, namely—

" *Exception II*—Where the information communicated has been obtained from a newspaper published outside British India, the provisions of this sub section shall not apply "

With the amendment that has been made in section 3 sub section ( 2 ) of the Act, namely, the inclusion of civil affairs within its scope, it now becomes a matter of considerable importance that at any rate information which is wired from England to newspapers in this country is not held to lie within the province of that section It may happen that upon an important matter something might appear in an English newspaper, the *Standard*, or the *Times*, or some such paper, and either a telegraphic summary of that might be sent out to India to some of the leading Anglo Indian papers or when the mail comes it might be copied by the newspapers in India The leakage may have taken place, not in Calcutta, but in the Secretary of State's office in London If such information has been published in England, and has been copied by any paper here, or a telegraphic summary has appeared in any paper here, under the law as it is now proposed to be amended this becomes an offence Now, my Lord, the essence of an offence under this Act is *publication* and not *publication here in India* If, therefore, the information has already been published anywhere else, then there really should be no objection to a newspaper in India re publishing it, and to penalize such republication is to restrict the freedom of the Press most unjustifiably, as there is no question of secrecy now involved I therefore submit, my Lord that this exception should be added to the proposed clause

One word of explanation is necessary It may be said that under the words

'outside British India' some newspaper in a Native State or foreign territory in India, might publish something which the Government of India wants to keep from the public, and then some newspaper in British India might copy therefrom. Well, I am not keen about extending the benefit of this exception to newspapers in Native States, if Government object to that, and for the words 'British India' in my proposed amendment I am prepared to substitute the word 'India'.

[ The motion was put and negatived. ]

### *Gokhale Opposes the Bill*

*At the same meeting Sir Arundel Arundel having moved that the Bill as amended be passed, Gokhale opposed the motion in the following speech :*

My Lord, the motion now before the Council is only a formal one. But as it marks the conclusion of our discussion of this important measure, I would like to say a few words. My Lord, I greatly regret that Government should not have seen their way to accepting even a single one of the more important amendments of which notice had been given. This is the first time within my experience that a legislative measure has been opposed by all classes and all sections of the public in this country with such absolute unanimity. Of course with our Legislative Councils as they are constituted at present, the Government has the power to pass any law it pleases. But never before, I think, did the Government dissociate itself so completely from all public opinion—including Anglo-Indian public opinion—as it has done on the present occasion. I recognize that the responsibility for the good administration of the country rests primarily on the shoulders of the Government. But it is difficult to allow that this responsibility can be satisfactorily discharged, unless the Government was supported in its legislative and executive measures by some sort of public opinion. My Lord, your Lordship<sup>1</sup> has often declared that it was your constant aspiration to carry the public with you as far as possible in all important acts of your administration. I do not think it can be said that that aspiration has been in the smallest degree realized in the present case. The whole position is really most extraordinary and very painfully significant. Here we had a law, already in force, identical in character and identical in wording with the law obtaining in the other parts of the British Empire. The British Government in England, with its vast naval and military concerns and its foreign relations extending over the surface of the whole globe, has not found its law insufficient for its purpose. How then has the Government of India, with its more limited concerns, found it necessary to make the law more drastic in India? The explanation, I think, is simple. It is that, while in England the Government dare not touch the liberty of the Press, no matter how annoying its disclosures may be, and has to reconcile

<sup>1</sup> LORD CURZON, Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1899-1905).

itself to them as only so much journalistic enterprise, in India the unlimited power which the Government possesses inclines it constantly to repressive legislation. This single measure suffices to illustrate the enormous difference between the spirit in which the administration is carried on in India and that in which it is carried on in England. My Lord, as the Bill is still open to serious objection, I must vote against this motion to pass it.

## THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL

*At a meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held at Simla on Friday, the 18th October 1907, Sir Harvey Adamson<sup>1</sup> introduced the Bill "to make better provision for the prevention of meetings likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance of public tranquillity". The motion to refer the Bill to Select Committee was also passed at the same meeting. The Select Committee's report was presented to the Council on Friday, the 1st November 1907, also at Simla. On the motion for the consideration of the Select Committee's report, Gokhale made the following speech :*

### *Introduction of Controversial Bill at Simla Contrary to Convention*

For many years now it has been a well established practice of this Council that no important legislation — especially of a controversial character — should be enacted at Simla, but that it should be reserved for the session at Calcutta, where alone the assistance of all Additional Members is available. This practice has behind it the authority of a clear instruction from the Secretary of State. Thirty-two years ago, on the Government of Lord Northbrook<sup>2</sup> passing an important measure at Simla, Lord Salisbury,<sup>3</sup> then Secretary of State for India, deemed it necessary to address a remonstrance to the Governor-General in Council in the following words :

In providing that laws for India should be passed at a Council consisting not only of the Ordinary Members of the Executive Government, but of Additional Members specially added for the purpose (of whom some have always been unofficial), it was the clear intention of Parliament that in the task of legislation the Government should, in addition to the sources of information usually open to it, be enlightened by the advice and knowledge of persons possessing other than official experience. Of these you were unfortunately deprived in discussing the subject in respect to which the assistance of non-official Councillors is of special value.

My Lord, it is a matter for deep regret that the Government of India should have thought it proper to depart from this wise and salutary practice in the present instance. But the absence of most Additional Members from today's meeting is not my only ground of complaint against the course adopted by

<sup>1</sup> Home Member, Government of India (1906-10).

<sup>2</sup> EARL OF NORTHBROOK (1826-1904); Civil Lord of the Admiralty (1857); under-secretary for India (1859-61); secretary to the Admiralty (1866); Governor-General of India (1872-1876); First Lord of the Admiralty (1880).

<sup>3</sup> MARQUIS OF SALISBURY (1830-1903); Conservative M. P. (1853); Secretary of State for India (as Viscount Cranborne) (1866), Foreign Secretary (1878); thrice Prime Minister (1886, 1886-92, and 1895-1902).

Government I think it is no exaggeration to say, that this Bill has been received throughout the country with feelings of consternation and dismay, and yet it is being rushed through this Council in such hot haste, that practically no time has been allowed to the public to state its objections to the measure. The Hon'ble Sir Harvey Adamson, in introducing the Bill last Friday, observed :

From the date of its publication in the *Gazette* to the date on which it will be finally considered, an interval of twenty days has been allowed. I am confident that the time is sufficient for a full consideration of the merits of the Bill.

*No Time Allowed for Expression of Public Opinion*

I suppose the Hon'ble Member was indulging in a bit of cynical humour when he said this. Else, my Lord, it is not possible to understand his statement. I presume the object of publication is to give the public affected by the proposed legislation an opportunity to say what it thinks of the measure. This it can only do after it has had time to examine the provisions of the Bill, and such examination must, in fairness to Government, be made in the light of the reasons adduced by the Member in charge in introducing it. Now, my Lord, this Bill was published at Simla on 11th October, and its provisions, as telegraphed from here, appeared in the columns of the daily press of the country on the morning of the 12th. There are only seven or eight towns in the whole of India which have a daily press of their own. Of the others, the more important ones, which are served by these same dailies, have to wait for a day or two, and, in some cases, for even three or four or five days, before they get their daily budget of news. The smaller towns have, as a rule, to content themselves with weekly newspapers only. The Hon'ble Member must therefore allow at least a week's time for anything telegraphed from here to spread all over so vast a country as India.

Then, my Lord, the Bill was introduced in this Council only on 18th October, and a telegraphic report of the Hon'ble Member's speech in introducing it appeared in the dailies only on the morning of the 19th. Allowing another week as the very least time required for the speech to penetrate into the interior of the country, it brings us down to 26th October as the earliest date by which the whole case of the Government may be assumed to have been before the people. After this, some time would be required for deliberation, for the formulation of objections and for these objections to reach the Government and even if a month had been allowed for this purpose, it would hardly have sufficed. Meanwhile, what happens here ? The Select Committee, to whom the Bill was referred for consideration, meets on 22nd October, concludes its deliberations on 23rd, and makes its report on 24th.<sup>1</sup> Now, every one knows that once the Select Committee has made its report, the door is closed on all further modifications, and therefore for any expression of public opinion to be of the slightest value in influencing the character or details of a Bill, it must

reach the Government before the Select Committee finishes its labours. It is for this reason that the Rules of this Council lay down that ordinarily a Select Committee shall not make its report sooner than three months from the first publication of a Bill in the *Gazette of India*. In the present case the Select Committee had not the advantage of a single expression of public opinion to assist it; and even those few telegraphic protests, which had been received by the Government and of which some of us had received copies independently, were not laid before the Committee. My Lord, in the face of these facts to speak of having allowed sufficient time to the public for a full consideration of the Bill is to mock public opinion. Better far that the Hon'ble Member had said : " The Legislature exists in India only to register the decrees of the Executive. The passage of a Bill through the Council is a mere formality, and on occasions like the present an inconvenient formality. We are facing the inconvenience in this case simply because we must face it. But the people may as well spare themselves the trouble of making any representations to us. For we have made up our mind and nothing they can possibly say will affect our determination to make this addition to the Statute-book. Moreover, it is not for them to reason why or to make reply. Their only business is to obey." That the Hon'ble Member is not wholly unconscious of the fact that he has given practically no time to the public for what he calls " a full consideration of the merits of the Bill " may be seen from his providing himself with a second line of defence. He says that though the Bill has been before the public for a few days only the Ordinance which was promulgated in May last for the Provinces of East Bengal and the Punjab has been before the country for the last five months! He might as well have said that we had the History of Ireland before us all these years, or that we could not be altogether ignorant of what was taking place before our eyes in Russia !

My Lord, I can imagine circumstances of such extreme urgency and such extreme gravity as to necessitate the passing of a law of this kind and passing it even in the manner the Government have adopted. Had there been an active and widespread movement of resistance to authority afoot in the country, if breaches of public peace had been frequent, if incitements to violence had been the order of the day, I can understand the Executive wanting to arm themselves with these vast powers of coercion. But, my Lord, can any one truthfully say that such a state of things has arisen in the country? On the contrary, I assert, without fear of contradiction, that there is nothing in the circumstances of the land which constitutes even a distant approach to such a situation. It is true that there is widespread discontent throughout the country and very acute discontent in one or two Provinces, and to this discontent is now being added a fresh feeling of resentment—daily growing deeper and stronger—on account of the policy of repression on which the Government have embarked. But of active disaffection there is really very little anywhere, and whatever there is, is due to causes which lie almost on the surface, and should, therefore, be not difficult to understand. The Statement of Objects and Reasons,

appended to the Bill, says :

The occurrences of the last six months have convinced the Government of India that it is necessary, for the preservation of the public peace and for the protection of the law-abiding members of the community, to incorporate in the general law an effective measure for the prevention of seditious meetings and to take power to bring its provisions into operation in any part of India as occasion may require

### *No Case for Such Drastic Legislation*

And the Hon'ble Member, in introducing the Bill, observed

We had hoped that the need for an enactment of this kind would cease before the Ordinance expired, but in this hope we have been disappointed. It has become painfully apparent that persistent attempts continue to be made to promote sedition and to cause such ill feeling as is calculated to disturb the public tranquillity, and that these attempts are not confined to the two Provinces which came under the scope of the Ordinance

My Lord, these are serious but vague statements, and I am astonished that the Hon'ble Member has not seen the necessity of supporting them by the testimony of facts. He mentions no cases, no statistics, one general assertion that persistent attempts continue to be made to promote sedition, and he thinks he has established the need for enacting a drastic law of this kind for the whole country<sup>1</sup>. With due deference, I submit this is not a fair proceeding and the vast bulk of the people throughout India, who are perfectly law-abiding, have just cause to resent it. Let us examine the Hon'ble Member's contention a little closely. He says, first, that he had hoped that after the expiry of the Ordinance of May last, it would be unnecessary to renew its policy in the two Provinces in which it was in force, but that in this hope he has been disappointed, and, secondly, that unless that policy is extended to all the other Provinces of India, public tranquillity in those Provinces also would be in danger of being disturbed. Now, what are the facts? Let us take the Punjab first. In the whole of this Province there has been, as far as I am aware, only one public meeting since the promulgation of the Ordinance. It was held in Delhi, before Delhi was proclaimed, it was attended by both Hindus and Mahomedans, and its object was to express regret at Lala Lajpat Rai's<sup>1</sup> depor-

<sup>1</sup> LALA LAJPAT RAI (1865-1928) founder. Servants of the People Society, devout follower of Swami Dayanand collected Rs 5 lakhs for the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College Lahore took leading part in social reform movements and movements for the relief of distress caused by natural calamities which were sponsored by the Arya Samaj, joined National Congress (1883), was member of the Congress deputation to England (1905) deported to Burma for six months (1907) to escape police harassment, spent eight years in America where he conducted a paper called *Young India* president Calcutta Congress (1920) which adopted the non-co-operation programme, author of *Unhappy India* *Voice of Truth* etc. In this context attention is drawn to the letter which Gokhale wrote to the Press on 21st May 1907. The letter is reproduced after the day's proceedings



tation. There has been no disturbance of public tranquillity anywhere in the Province during the time. The Hon'ble Member will very probably say : "But this is all due to the Ordinance"! Assuming for a moment, for the sake of argument, that it is so, the fact remains that the Hon'ble Member has no reason to complain of any disappointment in the Punjab. Turning next to East Bengal, we find that there too, after the Hindu-Mahomedan disturbances which led to the promulgation of the Ordinance, were over, there has been no public disturbance. There have also been no public meetings held in defiance of the Ordinance, so far at least as the public is aware. A District Conference was proposed to be held at Faridpur with the District Magistrate's permission, but on his objecting to two of the resolutions on the agenda paper—one about the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, and the other about the boycott of foreign goods—the organisers thought it best to abandon the Conference. There was great public indignation and disappointment in consequence, but there was no breach of the peace. It is possible that the Secret Police have been sending up to Government reports of meetings held surreptitiously in private houses in proclaimed areas in Eastern Bengal, and indeed the Hon'ble Member says as much in his speech of 18th October. But, in the first place, it is necessary to accept with great caution what the Secret Police say in their reports, as the trial at Rawalpindi and other recent events have shown. And, secondly, even assuming that such meetings have been held, there have been no breaches of the peace, and no serious harm seems to have been done; and I think in affairs of State, no less than in private life, it is often the part of wisdom to wink at things, which it is difficult to prevent and which do no serious harm to anybody. So much about the two Provinces in which the Ordinance has been in force since May last.

Outside these Provinces public disturbances have taken place only in two places in all India—one at Cocanada, in the Madras Presidency, some time ago, and the other at Calcutta more recently. The former had its origin in an assault made by a European officer on a student for shouting the words *Bande Mataram*. In the latter, the Police themselves are alleged to have been the aggressors. But whatever the origin of these two disturbances, and however much one may deplore them, they certainly do not furnish any justification for saddling the whole country with such a measure as the Council is asked to pass into law today. As regards public meetings in the different Provinces, with the exception of some held in Calcutta, I do not think that they have been of a character to attract special public attention. Strong things have no doubt been said at some of these against the Government and even wild things have probably been said at a few, but this has been largely due to the measures of repression which the Government have thought fit to adopt since May last. My Lord, I do not think there is really anything in the situation of the country which may not be dealt with adequately by the ample powers which the Government already possess under the existing law, if those powers are exercised with tact, judgment and firmness. In any case there is nothing of such urgency and

such gravity as to require an immediate resort to the dangerous provisions of this Bill and to justify its being rushed through this Council in this manner. The Hon ble Member says that as the Ordinance of May last expires on 10th November, unless the Bill is passed before that date, there would be a hiatus. This applies only to Eastern Bengal and the Punjab, and of these, the Punjab has been so absolutely quiet that the Government of India may well give it a chance of being again under the ordinary law. And as regards East Bengal, if the situation showed signs of real anxiety, the Government could issue another Ordinance, or legislation might be undertaken in the local Legislative Council. In such matters it seems to me far fairer that if there must be legislation, it should be undertaken by Provincial Governments in their own Councils. Such a course will ensure a proper discussion, with full knowledge on both sides, of all the special circumstances of a Province on which the Executive base their demand for extraordinary powers. It will also obviate the risk of enacting coercive legislation for those Provinces for which the ordinary law ought to suffice.

### *Misrepresentation of Aims of Educated Classes*

My Lord, the bulk of the educated classes in India feel, and feel keenly, that during the last six months, their aims and their activities have been most cruelly misrepresented before the British public, and that they have not had fair play during the time. Exaggerated importance has been attached to the utterances of a few visionaries, and advantage has been taken of every accidental circumstance to represent an agitation for reform and for the removal of specific grievances as a movement of revolt. The malignant activity of certain unscrupulous Press correspondents has been largely responsible for achieving this result, but unfortunately colour has been lent to their stories by the series of repressive measures which the Government themselves have adopted. The saddest part of the whole thing is that the Secretary of State for India<sup>1</sup> has fallen a victim to these grievous misrepresentations. Possessing no personal knowledge of the people of this country, and overwhelmed with a sense of the vast responsibilities of his office, he has allowed his vision to be obscured and his sense of proportion to be warped. From time to time he has let fall ominous hints in the House of Commons, and more than once he has spoken as though some great trouble was brewing in India, and the country was on the eve of a dark disaster. My Lord, in these circumstances, the passing of a Bill like the present and in such hot haste, is bound to have the effect of confirming the false impression which has been already created in England, and this cannot fail to intensify and deepen still further the sense of injustice and injury and the silent resentment with which my countrymen have been watching the course of events during the last few months. I think the Government are

<sup>1</sup> VISCOUNT MORLEY (1838-1923), entered House of Commons ( 1883 ) as Vice Chief Secretary for Ireland ( 1886 and 1892 ), Secretary of State for India ( 1905-10 )

repeating in this matter the great mistake they made when they partitioned Bengal. Whatever advantages as regards administrative efficiency may have been expected from that measure, it has cost the Government the goodwill of the vast majority of the people of that Province, and this is a loss which no amount of administrative efficiency can balance or compensate. Similarly, for one man whose wild talk the Government may be able to prevent by this Bill, nine hundred and ninety-nine will smart under a sense of injury that they have been placed under a law which they have not deserved and their minds will drift away silently and steadily from the Government, till at last their whole attitude towards the administration is changed.

### *Causes of Present "Sedition"*

My Lord, so much has of late been said and heard of sedition in India, that a brief inquiry as to how far it really exists and to the extent to which it may exist, what is its origin and its character, may not be out of place at today's meeting. Five years ago, when Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> announced to the whole world at the Delhi Durbar that the people of India were frankly loyal to the British connection and the British Crown, I believe he stated but the bare truth. Now, when any one speaks of loyalty in India in this connection, he speaks not of a sentiment similar to that of feudal Europe or of Rajput India, but of a feeling of attachment to British rule, and of a desire for its stability based on enlightened self-interest — on an appreciation of what the rule has on the whole done for the people in the past and of the conditions which it ensures for future progress. In this sense the educated classes of India have been from the beginning entirely loyal. It was, however, inevitable that they should gradually grow more and more dissatisfied with their own position in the country and with the existing system of administration, and twenty-two years ago they started an organised agitation for reform. This agitation, perfectly constitutional in its aims and methods, rapidly grew all over the country from year to year. It had not received much encouragement from the Government, but no serious obstacles had anywhere been thrown in its way, and its current flowed more or less smoothly and on the whole free from racial bitterness till Lord Curzon's time. Then came a great and, in some respects, a decisive change. Lord Curzon's reactionary policy, his attempt to explain away the Queen's Proclamation, his unwise Convocation speech at Calcutta — all these produced intense exasperation throughout India. This exasperation was the worst in Bengal, because though Lord Curzon's measures affected all India, they fell with special weight on Bengal. And when on the top of these measures the Partition of Bengal was carried through, a bitter and stormy agitation sprang up in that Province, in which the general agitation for reform soon got completely merged. The bitterness of the Bengal agitation gradually came to communicate itself to

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.

the reform movement all over the country by a sort of sympathetic process. Bengal has always been the home of feeling and of ideas more than any other part of India. The people took to heart very deeply the failure of their agitation against the Partition, and then the more reckless among them began to ask themselves new questions and came forward to preach what they called new ideas. It is true that they have received a certain amount of hearing in the country, but that is more on account of the passion and poetry of their utterance than on account of any belief in the practicability of their views. Their influence, such as it is today, is due to the alienation of the public mind from the Government, which has already occurred, but which the Government have it still in their power to set right. Measures of repression will only further alienate the people, and to that extent will strengthen this influence.

At the beginning of this year, another acute agitation sprang up, this time in the Punjab, against the Colonisation Bill and other agrarian grievances, and here a fresh element of bitterness was added to the situation by the State prosecution of the *Punjabee* on a charge of exciting racial ill-will, when the *Civil and Military Gazette* had been let off with only a gentle remonstrance. This agitation too on its side swallowed up for the time the general reform agitation in the Punjab, and the reform movement in other parts of India could not escape being affected by it. Then came the demonstrations at Lahore and the disturbance at Rawalpindi, and then the repressive measures of the Government—notably the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, the arrest and prosecution of Rawalpindi pleaders and the Public Meetings Ordinance. The whole country was convulsed and while the Punjab itself was paralysed, in other parts of India even the most level-headed men found it difficult to express themselves with due restraint. That a man like Lala Lajpat Rai, loved by thousands not in his own Province only, a man of high character and of elevated feeling, a keen religious and social reformer, and a political worker, who, whatever his faults, worked only in broad daylight, should have been suddenly arrested and deported without a trial—this was a proceeding which stunned the people throughout India. And as regards the Rawalpindi case, what shall I say? For four months the whole country witnessed the spectacle of the venerable Lala Hansraj,<sup>1</sup> a man as incapable of promoting disorder as any member sitting at this table, with other gentlemen equally respectable, rotting in the lock-up on a charge of inciting to violence and conspiring against the Crown! My Lord, it will be long before the memory of the sufferings of these men is wiped from the public mind. Meanwhile the country is waiting to see how the authorities deal with those who brought these sufferings on them by producing evidence which the trying Magistrate has pronounced to be 'most untrust-

<sup>1</sup>LALA HANSRAJ (1864-1938), devoted himself to the cause of education and social reform, closely associated with the Dayanand Anglo Vedic Society in the Punjab started several schools and colleges, worked for the uplift of widows and the down trodden, never spared himself in the relief of distress caused by such natural calamities as fire, floods, earthquakes, etc

worthy and probably fabricated! My Lord, with these things happening in the country, is it any wonder that the voice of those who counsel patience and moderation and self-restraint should be for the time at a discount among their countrymen? The occurrences of the last six months have afforded ample encouragement to those who like to talk strongly and do not occasionally mind talking wildly.

*Wise and Steady Conciliation — the Remedy*

This, then, is the position. A few men in Bengal have now taken to preaching a new gospel, and here and there in the country one occasionally hears a faint echo of their teaching. But their power to influence the people—to the extent to which they are able to influence them—is derived mainly from the sense of helplessness and despair which has come to prevail widely in the country, both as regards the prospects of reform in the administration and as regards the removal of particular grievances. The remedy for such a state of things is therefore clearly not more repression but a course of wise and steady conciliation on the part of the Government. Your Lordship has already taken a most important step in the direction of such conciliation, so far as the Punjab is concerned, by vetoing the Colonisation Act. Let the work of conciliation be carried further, let the deported prisoners be brought back, and if the Government have anything against them, let them have a fair trial; and let the Province remain under the ordinary law after the Ordinance expires. As in the Punjab the Colonisation Act has been vetoed, so in Bengal let Partition be modified in some manner acceptable to the Bengalees. The causes of acute discontent in these two Provinces will then have disappeared and the old stream of a movement for reform will be separated from the bitter tributaries that have recently mingled with it. The Government can then deal with the question of reform on its own merits and if it is handled in a spirit of broad-minded statesmanship a solution may be arrived at which will give general satisfaction.

In this connection, I would like to say a word about a remark that fell from the Hon'ble Sir Harvey Adamson on 18th October. Speaking of the necessity of coercion, the Hon'ble Member said: 'The Government of India have all along recognised that unrest is not solely the outcome of seditious agitation, but has its basis on the natural aspirations of the educated Indians. To meet these aspirations and to associate Indians more closely in the administration of the country, we formulated a large and generous scheme of reform<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to a scheme of reform framed by a Committee of the Viceroy's executive council which was appointed by Lord Minto "of his own initiative" in order "to consider the possibility of a development of the administrative machinery in accordance with the new conditions we were called upon to face." Under the scheme, to give one instance, real Indian non-official representation in its 'projected Imperial Legislative Council' was restricted to a mere seven elected by provincial councils in a house of 54!

which is now before the public for criticism' And he proceeded to express his disappointment at the reception which the scheme had met with and to complain that that reception showed that the Government had to deal with a section of irreconcilables My Lord, I am sure the Hon'ble Member had no intention of branding all who are unable to grow enthusiastic over the Government proposals as 'irreconcilables' The words employed by him have, however, been so understood, as may be seen from the telegram of the Bombay Presidency Association<sup>1</sup>, and this is rather unfortunate But what I want to say is this If the Hon'ble Member expected that the publication of the Government scheme of August last would allay the discontent in the country in any degree, he was bound to be disappointed The scheme is neither large nor generous, and in some respects it is not a scheme of reform at all And the general disappointment which it has occasioned has necessarily intensified the prevailing feeling of discontent As though this was not enough, the language employed in explaining the proposals is in some places unnecessarily offensive to certain classes And taken as a whole, the document, I regret to say, lacks that dignity of statement which one always likes to see associated in an important State paper

*Proposed Safeguards Are Illusory*

My Lord, it has been said that though this Bill may be passed for the whole country, yet the people of any given place have two safeguards before they actually come under its provisions The first is that the Government of India must extend this Act to their Province, and the second is that the Local Government must notify the place as a proclaimed area A little consideration will, however, show that there is really not much in either of these safeguards The first is purely nominal A place may be absolutely free from sedition of any kind and yet if it is thought that some other place in the same Province requires the application of the provisions of this Act, the Government of India have no option but to extend the Act to the whole Province And thus for the sake of even one place, a whole Province will have this Act applied to it Again, when the Act has thus been extended to a Province, any place therein may find itself suddenly proclaimed for the seditious activity, real or supposed, of only a few persons, though the vast bulk of the population may be perfectly law abiding and free from the faintest suspicion of sedition And once an area is proclaimed, the whole population will be indiscriminately made over to police rule It is this fear which, apart from other objections, lies at the root of the great anxiety and alarm with which the Bill is regarded in all parts of the country The Hon'ble Member says that when it is thought necessary to proclaim an area, 'it is reasonable that law abiding persons residing within that area should be prepared to suffer some slight inconvenience for the public

<sup>1</sup> A political association established in Bombay in 1885 for the promotion and advocacy of the public interests of this country "

good.' I wonder what the Hon'ble Member's idea of a slight inconvenience is. Is it a slight thing to be exposed to the annoyance and unpleasantness of domiciliary visits? Or to have social parties of more than twenty persons raided upon or broken up, and the host and even guests hauled up for holding a 'public meeting' without notice? The presumption of clause 3, sub-clause (3), may be successfully rebutted in Court and the Magistrate may acquit. But think of the trouble and misery which may be most needlessly caused. My Lord, with the kind of police we have in the country—men, for the most part, without scruple and without remorse—these are not imaginary fears. We have just seen at Rawalpindi what they are capable of. Other instances can also be cited, where cases have been manufactured from start to finish. It is true that the intention of the Bill is not to interfere with social parties. It is also true that under section 4, notice has to be given only of such public meetings as may be called for the discussion of particular subjects. But a Police-officer who is interested in getting any man into trouble can always pretend that a gathering of more than twenty persons was a public meeting, and it will not be difficult for him to arrange for a little evidence that the gathering was held for the discussion of a political subject. And under the plea that an offence was taking place, viz. that a public meeting was being held without notice, he may want to be admitted to the place of the gathering. If the host is a strong man and knows his legal rights well, he may resist the officer and decline to admit him. But he may then find himself hauled up before a Magistrate and must be prepared to face a trial. But for one strong man who will thus defy the Police, nine will tamely yield. Moreover, in those cases which may go before a Court, how the Magistrate will construe the definition of 'public meeting' must always remain a matter of uncertainty. A curious illustration of this is supplied by the Hon'ble Member himself. Last Friday, the Hon'ble Member told the Council that the object of adding sub-clause (3) to clause 4 was to exempt meetings like municipal meetings from the requirements of notice or permission. 'If the provision,' he observed, 'were construed rigidly, it might be necessary to give notice or obtain permission before holding Municipal meetings in a proclaimed area.' In the Hon'ble Member's view, therefore, a Municipal meeting is a public meeting. My Hon'ble friend, Dr. Ghose,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, tells me that a Municipal meeting cannot be a public meeting under the definition given in the Bill. Now, the Hon'ble Member was Chief Judge of Burma before he became Home Member of the Government of India. And Dr. Ghose is one of the most learned and distinguished lawyers in the country. A difference of opinion between two such authorities in construing the defini-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. RASH BEHARY GHOSE (1840-1921); well-known jurist; closely connected with the Calcutta University to which he made a donation of several lakhs of rupees; chairman, Reception Committee, Calcutta Congress (1906); presided over the Surat Congress (1907) which ended in confusion; president, Madras Congress (1908).

tion of public meeting, even before the Bill has become law, augurs ill for the manner in which the definition may be dealt with by pliant or inexperienced Magistrates!

### *Urges Abandonment of the Bill*

My Lord, there are other objectionable features of the Bill, but I do not wish to tire the Council with any further observations. The Bill is a dangerous one, and the only satisfactory way to improve it is to drop it. But more than the Bill itself is, to my mind, the policy that lies behind the Bill. I consider this policy to be in the highest degree unwise. It will fail in India as surely as it has failed everywhere else in the world. It will plant in the minds of the people harsh memories which even time may not soften. It will by no means facilitate the work of the administration, and it will in all probability enhance the very evil which it is intended to control.

### *50 Rather Than 20 May Constitute a Meeting*

*In the course of the detailed consideration of the Bill at the same meeting Gokhale moved*

that in clause 3, sub-clause (3), of the Bill, for the word 'twenty' the word 'fifty' be substituted.

He said: My Lord, this is the sub clause of which my Hon'ble friend Dr Rash Behary Ghose just now moved the omission. It provides that 'a meeting of more than 20 persons shall be presumed to be a public meeting within the meaning of this Act until the contrary is proved.' My reasons for moving that 50 be substituted are the following. Firstly, all limits of this character are arbitrary. There is no more merit in 20 than in any other number. In my opinion however 50 would be a more reasonable number than 20. Secondly, we have the precedent of the English Acts of George III's reign. There the number was always 50. Thirdly, under the number proposed by me ordinary social parties will be excluded. A great deal of apprehension prevails that social parties might be disturbed and that a host might get into trouble if there was any ill feeling between him and the police. It would be a good thing if ordinary social parties could be put outside the jurisdiction of the clause. Fourthly, the object of this provision is that inflammatory oratory should be suppressed or prevented. Now, I should like to know what public speaker could make an inflammatory speech to 20 people. The material is lacking, the atmosphere is lacking. An address to a meeting of 20 people could not but be more or less a quiet affair. I think therefore that the limit should be fifty and not twenty.

[The motion was put and negatived.]



*Discussion of "Political Subject" Should not be Barred*

*Gokhale then moved*

that in clause 4, sub-clause (I), of the Bill, for the word 'subject', in line 5, the word 'grievance' be substituted.

He said : My Lord, the amendment has reference to those public meetings of which notice has been given to the Superintendent of Police or for which permission has to be obtained from the authorities. The words in the clause are :

'No public meeting for the furtherance of or discussion of any subject likely to cause disturbance or public excitement or of any political subject or for the exhibition or distribution of any writing or printed matter relating to any such subject shall be held in any proclaimed area—

(a) unless written notice of the intention to hold such meeting and of the time and place of such meeting has been given to the District Superintendent of Police or the Commissioner of Police, as the case may be, at least three days previously; or

(b) unless permission to hold such meeting has been obtained in writing from the District Superintendent of Police or the Commissioner of Police, as the case may be'.

I do not understand why the Government should want to control the discussion on any political subject. I should be inclined to propose that the words 'political subject' be omitted altogether. The section would then be confined to subjects likely to cause a disturbance or public excitement. This is all that the Executive want. However, I understand the authorities want to know what is said about any political grievances, in the discussion of which sentiments, actually seditious, or at least bordering on the seditious, are likely to be expressed. From that standpoint I think the requirements of Government would be met if the word 'grievance' were substituted for the word 'subject'.

If a professor of a college were to ask more than 20 pupils to his house to discuss a political subject, under the provisions of the Bill, it will be open to a Police officer to represent this as a public meeting. Of course the Courts will probably hold that it was not a public meeting. But if there was any ill-feeling between the Professor and the Police, there might be trouble. I do not see why such wide powers should be taken by the Government; and therefore I suggest the substitution for 'subject' of the word 'grievance'.

[ The motion was put and negatived. ]

*Bill's Life Should be Limited to One Year*

*Later at the same meeting Gokhale moved :*

that in clause 9 of the Bill, for the word 'three' the word 'one' be substituted.

He said My Lord, this new clause, which was added by the Select Committee, restricts the operation of this Bill to three years. Originally it was proposed that this law should be a permanent addition to the Statute-book, but in the Select Committee the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill was good enough to recognize the force of the objection that such a measure should not be permanently added to the Statute book, and he expressed his willingness to limit the period to three years. I think, however, that the limit of even three years is too high, and I think for the present we should be satisfied with one year. The Hon'ble Member has told us that when the Ordinance was promulgated it had to be done in a hurry, and that after experience of its working certain suggestions were received from the two Local Governments which had to enforce it. The same thing is likely to occur with this Bill. A year's time may reveal defects which may have to be set right, and therefore, if it is found necessary to maintain this legislation in force longer, the subject should come before the Legislature at the end of a year.

I have another ground on which I move this amendment. I have already pointed out that very few of the Additional Members have been able to attend this Council meeting. Sir Harvey Adamson seemed to make light of the absence of the Additional Members and considered that, if they had thought this matter was of importance, they would have been present. It was only a matter of travelling a little distance, he said. But I know at what inconvenience I had to travel 1,300 miles just for the sake of taking part in these deliberations. There was no notice given to the Members of this Bill, the first thing I saw anything about it was in the papers. I may mention that at this Simla session of the Council, Additional Members are not expected to be present. A formal summons is, no doubt, sent us at the beginning of the session, but the Secretary sends a private letter saying that the presence of Additional Members is not necessary. If Government wanted to introduce a measure which has created so much feeling throughout the country, surely some notice should have been sent to Additional Members. But no notice was sent and it cannot therefore be said that the absence of Additional Members indicates that they have no interest in the measure. That the public has been greatly stirred is shown by the many telegrams and protests that are being received even now against the measure. In view of these facts, in view of the necessity of giving the public a proper opportunity to express their views, and in view of the desirability of setting right any defects that might be revealed in the course of a year, I propose that the limit should be fixed at one year instead of three.

[ The motion was put and negatived ]

*When Sir Harvey Adamson moved that the Bill, as amended be passed, Gokhale said*

My Lord, I had not intended saying more than just a word at this stage of the Bill and that only by way of an appeal to your Excellency. But certain remarks have fallen from the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill with regard to the responsibility for this legislation, which makes it necessary that

I should say a few words in reply as it is impossible to allow those remarks to pass unchallenged. The Hon'ble Member says that the responsibility for this Bill really rests with those who are described as the Moderate section of the Reform party in India. Now, I for one have never been in love with the terms, moderates and extremists. There is at times a great deal of moderation among some of those who are called extremists and, on the other hand, there is no small amount of what is the reverse of moderation among some who are known as moderates. However, I fear the terms as they are now in use will stick and for purposes of my present observations, I will take them as they have been used by the Hon'ble Member. My Lord, I think it most unfair to put the responsibility for such sedition as may be in existence in this country on what is called the moderate party.

### *Government Responsible for Sedition*

In the remarks which I made at an earlier stage of today's proceedings, I went at some length into the question as to how the present situation has come to be developed. I do not want to go over the same ground again, but there are one or two things which I would like to mention and emphasize. My Lord, when the officials in this country talk of sedition, they do not always mean the same thing. Different officials have different ideas of sedition. There are those who think that unless an Indian speaks to them with 'bated breath and whispering humbleness' he is seditious. There are others who do not go so far, but who still think that any one who comments adversely on any of their actions or criticises the administration in any way or engages in any political agitation is guilty of sedition. Lastly, there are those who take a larger view of the situation and recognise that the term sedition should be applied only to those attempts that are made to subvert the Government. Now, I have no wish to say anything on this occasion about the first two classes of men. I will take sedition in the sense in which it is used by the third class and I will say this, that if such sedition has come into existence it is comparatively a recent growth, a matter of the last three or four years only—and the responsibility for it rests mainly, if not entirely on the Government or rather on the official class.

My Lord, from 1885, i.e. since the close of the beneficent Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon,<sup>1</sup> the Congress has been endeavouring to secure some much needed reforms in the administration. The present form of the administration is about fifty years old. We have long outgrown that now and the fact is admitted even by officials. But while they admit, in a general sort of way, that changes are necessary, they have some objection or other to urge against every change that is proposed. The result is that there has been hardly any movement forward,

<sup>1</sup>MARQUIS OF RIPON (1827-1909); Liberal M.P. (1853-57); on the death of his father, entered the House of Lords (1859); under-secretary for War (1859); secretary for War (1863); Governor-General of India (1880-84).

in spite of our efforts all these years and the patience of the more impatient among my countrymen has at last given way. In the earlier years of the Congress there used to be some room for a hope that the desired changes in the administration would come. After Lord Ripon came Lord Dufferin,<sup>1</sup> who was not unfriendly to the Congress, though he was somewhat suspicious and he gave us the Public Service Commission. After him came Lord Lansdowne.<sup>2</sup> He too was, on the whole, friendly though he was over-cautious and he gave us the first Reform of the Legislative Councils. Then came Lord Elgin<sup>3</sup> and from his time the fortunes of the Reform party have been at a low ebb. Lord Elgin's term of office was darkened by plague, famine and Frontier Wars and towards its close came repressive legislation against the Press. Then came Lord Curzon. He was a consummate master of glowing periods and during the first two years of his regime, high hopes were raised in the country. These hopes, however, were soon dashed to the ground on account of a series of reactionary measures which he forced on the people. This disappointment coupled with the sense of constant irritation which we felt during the last three years of his rule, proved too much for a section of the Congress Party and they began to declare that their old faith in England's mission in this country was gone. Then came the Partition as the proverbial last straw. The people of Bengal did all they could and all they knew to avert that Partition. Hundreds of meetings were held all over the Province. Prayers and protests poured in upon the Government and the people used every means in their power to prevail upon Lord Curzon to abandon his idea. But he simply treated the whole agitation with contempt and carried his measure through. The men who are called moderates pointed out again and again to the Government the unwisdom of its course. They warned them that the measure, if forced on the people in spite of all the furious opposition that was being offered to it, would put too great a strain on their loyalty and that some of them, at any rate, would not be able to stand that strain, and events happened as they had been foreseen. The Hon'ble Member complains that open disloyalty is now being preached in Bengal. But no heed was given to the words of the moderates while there was time. And now, when the mischief has been done, the Hon'ble Member turns round and wants to throw the responsibility for what has happened on us!

<sup>1</sup> MARQUIS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA (1826-1902), British Commissioner at the Porte (1860), under-secretary for India (1864), secretary for War (1866), chancellor, Duchy of Lancaster (1868), Governor General of Canada (1872-78), Ambassador to Russia (1879), Governor General of India (1884-88), Ambassador to Italy (1889).

<sup>2</sup> MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE (1845-1927), under-secretary for India (1880), Governor General of Canada (1883-88), Governor General of India (1888-94), secretary for War (1895).

<sup>3</sup> EARL OF ELGIN (1849-1917), Treasurer of Households, and later First Commissioner of Works (1886), Viceroy of India (1894-99), chairman, Royal Commission to inquire into the military preparations for the South African War and into allegations of extravagance and contractual fraud (1902).

As regards the question of the moderates denouncing the extremists, it is not such a very easy matter. In the first place, I am not sure that there is such an absence of disapproval or remonstrance as the Hon'ble Member imagines. But, secondly, such denunciation is largely a question of temperament. All people do not always denounce whatever they disapprove. I will answer the Hon'ble Member's question in the matter by a counter-question. There are certain Anglo-Indian newspapers which constantly revile Indians. Has the Hon'ble Member ever denounced anything that has appeared in their columns? I am sure he and many others like him disapprove what often appears in the columns of the *Civil and Military Gazette* or the *Englishman*. But have any Englishmen in any place ever met together and expressed their condemnation of these papers? I hope the Hon'ble Member will now see that the question of denouncing those whose conduct you disapprove is not such an easy one. Moreover, with us there is an additional reason. We do not want to make confusion worse confounded. There are already enough divisions, in all conscience, in the country and we do not want to have a fresh cause of contention if we can help it. But let me say this to the Hon. Member. Whether the moderates remain silent or denounce the extremists, it will make very little difference in the hold which the extremists are acquiring on certain minds of India. There is only one way in which the wings of disaffection can be clipped, and that is by the Government pursuing a policy of steady and courageous conciliation.

*Keep These Drastic Powers in Reserve : Don't Use Them*

My Lord, the appeal that I want to make today is this. Now that the Government have armed themselves with these drastic powers of coercion, I would humbly say to your Lordship—keep these powers in reserve; do not use them immediately as far as possible, and conciliate Bengal. My Lord, there is the root of the trouble. With Bengal unconciliated in the matter of Partition there will be no real peace, not only in Bengal but in any other province in India. The whole current of public life in the country is being poisoned by the bitterness engendered in Bengal over this question of Partition. My Lord, I am not a Bengalee, and therefore I can say these things with the less reserve and without any fear of being misunderstood. The people of Bengal are the most emotional people in all India, and they will far sooner forget a material injury than one to their feelings. Now in this matter of the Partition—whatever its advantages or disadvantages, I am not concerned with that just now—there is no doubt whatever that their deepest feelings are involved. They feel that they have been trampled upon. And while they feel like that, there can be no peace. Already great alienation has taken place between them and the Government, and every day the position is growing worse.

The refusal of the sufferers in the recent disturbances to appear before Mr. Weston to give evidence is a significant illustration of the change that is coming

over Bengal The Government propose to meet this change by a policy of repression My Lord, knowing the people of Bengal as I do, I venture to predict that they *will* not be thus put down by force The Bengalees are in many respects a most remarkable people in all India It is easy to speak of their faults They lie on the surface, but they have great qualities which are sometimes lost sight of In almost all the walks of life open to the Indians, the Bengalees are among the most distinguished Some of the greatest social and religious reformers of recent times have come from their ranks Of orators, journalists, politicians, Bengal possesses some of the most brilliant But I will not speak of them on this occasion because this class is more or less at a discount in this place But take science or law or literature Where will you find a scientist in all India to place by the side of Dr J C Bose<sup>1</sup> or Dr P C Roy<sup>2</sup>? Or a jurist like Dr Ghose? Or a poet like Rabindranath Tagore<sup>3</sup>? My Lord, these men are not mere freaks of nature They are the highest products of which the race is regularly capable, and a race of such capability cannot, I repeat, be put down by coercion One serious defect of national character has often been alleged against them,—want of physical courage, but they are already being twitted out of it The young men of Bengal have taken this reproach so much to heart that if the stories in some Anglo Indian papers are to be believed, so far from shrinking from physical collisions, they seem to be now actually spoiling for them My Lord, if the present estrangement between the Government and the people of Bengal is allowed to continue, ten years hence there will not be one man in a thousand in that province who has a kindly feeling for the Englishman Then the Government will have on their hands a tremendous problem, for there are thirty-three millions of Bengalees, and the unwisdom and the danger of driving discontent underground amidst such a population will then be obvious

My Lord, I appeal to your Lordship to stanch this wound while there is yet time I know the question is now complicated by the fact that the Mahomedan population of East Bengal expect certain educational and other advantages to accrue to them from Partition No real well-wisher of India can desire that any of these advantages should be withdrawn from them, for the more the Mahomedan community progresses, the better for the whole country But surely it cannot be beyond the resources of statesmanship to devise a scheme, whereby while the expected advantages are fully secured to the Mahomedans,

<sup>1</sup> SIR J C BOSE (1858 1937), I.E.S., scientist, professor of Physics, Presidency College, Calcutta (1885 1915), discoverer of the molecular stress and strain theory, founder, Bose Research Institute for Scientific Research (1917), author of several scientific works

<sup>2</sup> SIR P C ROY (1861-1944) chemist and research worker, professor of Science Presidency College, Calcutta, principal College of Science, Calcutta (1921-36), founder, School of Chemistry, and the Indian Chemical Society

<sup>3</sup> RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861 1941), poet and author, started composing poetry when he was 15, founder of Shanti Niketan University, wrote 38 dramas, 35 political books and 19 collections of short stories

the people of Bengal may also have their great grievance removed. My Lord, considerations of prestige which have so far stood in the way of this work of conciliation may continue to obstruct it. I cannot understand how a Government, with the vast strength of a mighty Empire behind it, will suffer in prestige by such a line of action. But one thing is certain. Your Lordship has it in your power to set this matter right. And you will earn the blessing not only of Bengal but of all India, if this source of continued bitterness and ill-feeling is removed from the land.

# LALA LAJPAT RAI'S DEPORTATION

## GOKHALE'S LETTER TO THE PRESS

Now that the first outburst of public feeling, occasioned by the sudden arrest and deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, has somewhat subsided, permit me to say in your columns that it is not fair that the country should still be kept in the dark as to the grounds on which the Government have thought it necessary to take so grave a step. Some light is no doubt thrown on the situation by the utterances of Ministers in England, but it is a kind of light which only emphasizes the need for greater light. Mr. Morley speaks in the House of Commons of the 'emergency' and the 'risk' of the situation, and the Minister for War, after referring to the anxieties of the Imperial Government in connection with India, indulges in the amazing reminder that the arm of the Crown is as strong as, if not stronger than, fifty years ago, to deal with any outbreak. The authorities in England would thus seem to have been persuaded that we were on the eve of a second Mutiny and the Government of India must recognize the necessity of stating publicly how they felt themselves justified in presenting to the Ministry in England so alarming a picture of the situation in the country and how they came to connect Lala Lajpat Rai with any possible outbreak that they apprehended. I have been following events in the Punjab with close attention for some time past and I have carefully scanned all that has appeared for the last few days in the *Anglo-Indian press*,—the only possible source of official information in the country when the Government does not speak out. Brushing aside the wild stories to which the *Civil and Military Gazette* has thought fit to give currency, viz. that Lala Lajpat Rai had a hundred thousand desperate men under him and that he was contemplating an attack on the Fort of Lahore on 10th May, the impressions I have been able to gather are as follows: (1) that there has been serious and widespread dissatisfaction among the peasantry owing to recent land legislation and the enhancement of canal rates, (2) that this dissatisfaction has spread to some of the Indian troops in the Province owing to their being drawn from the ranks of the peasantry, (3) that some thoughtless individuals have probably endeavoured to take advantage of this dissatisfaction and have tried to tamper with the loyalty of the troops, (4) that the military authorities grew anxious in consequence and probably Lord Kitchener insisted on strong measures being adopted, (5) that the relations between the European community and the Indian civil population have been steadily growing worse and they have been further embittered by the prosecution and conviction of the Editor and Proprietor of the *Punjabee*, (6) that a vague feeling of nervous apprehension prevailed at the beginning of this month, specially among the European community, that on the 10th May, the fiftieth anniversary of the Indian Mutiny, there would be a fresh outbreak of mutiny in the Province, (7) that this feeling was strengthened by demonstrations and acts of rowdysm committed by disorderly mobs against Europeans in Lahore and Rawalpindi in connection with the conviction of the *Punjabee* and the extraordinary notices issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi on certain leading members of the Bar, (8) that the Local Government therefore thought it necessary to make an impressive show of force before the 10th May so as to repress any mutinous tendencies that might exist and they struck at Lala Lajpat Rai simply because he was the most prominent political worker in the Province.

This being my reading of the situation, I feel most strongly that the Government have done a grievous wrong to Lala Lajpat Rai in depriving him of his liberty without a trial and deporting him out of the country. No doubt the Police have plied the Local Government with secret reports against him, but we all know the utter worthlessness of such reports in this country, especially when there is no likelihood of their correctness being tested in a Court of Law. I have known Lala Lajpat Rai for several years and latterly my relations with him have been of an intimate character. In 1905, we both went to England on a political mission and for several weeks we lived and worked together like brothers. Only last February I was his



guest in Lahore for four days. Again and again he and I have discussed our aims, our hopes, our methods of work and there never has been any substantial difference of opinion between us. His language was at times a trifle strong — this must necessarily be a matter of temperament — but his aims and methods have always been strictly constitutional and I refuse to believe, unless clear evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, that he could ever have done anything that could in any way constitute a justification for the action of the Government. Lala Lajpat Rai is no mere dreamer; he has been all his life an earnest, and practical worker, and has behind him a record of solid work of which any Indian may be proud. He knows the limits within which political agitation must be confined if it is to be really fruitful in the present circumstances of the country, and it is inconceivable that he can have transgressed those limits.

I may mention here one or two small things within my own knowledge, as they serve to show how unjust have been the suspicions of the authorities about Lala Lajpat Rai. The day on which I reached Lahore last February, happened to be the day on which Mr. Mant delivered his judgment in the *Punjabee* case, inflicting two years' and six months' rigorous imprisonment on the Proprietor and the Editor of the paper respectively. There was intense indignation in the city in consequence, and a crowd was understood to have insulted some European ladies. Now no one deplored this conduct of the crowd more than Lala Lajpat Rai and I was present in his house when he severely reprimanded some young men for their sympathy with what he described as 'a disgraceful demonstration'. And yet the next day, I heard it said in more than one quarter that Lala Lajpat Rai must have been at the bottom of the previous day's rowdyism! Again only last March he sent me a carefully compiled statement about the practice which prevails in some districts of the Punjab, where District Judges go to Hill Stations and hold their Courts there, thus causing great inconvenience to parties and pleaders, who find it difficult to procure suitable accommodation for themselves at those stations. And I laid the substance of this statement before the Home Member, Sir Harvey Adamson, in a private interview. Now men who are engaged in plotting to overthrow British rule are not likely to trouble themselves about the removal of hardships suffered by litigants in Courts of Law! I think the Government have entirely misjudged the volume and character of the unrest prevalent in the Punjab. It is twelve days today since Lala Lajpat Rai was deported and yet so far not only has there been no semblance of an outbreak anywhere in the Province, but Sir Denzil Ibbetson, 'the one strong man of the civil administration,' as some Anglo-Indian newspapers are exultantly describing him, thinks it quite safe to lay down temporarily the reins of office at this very juncture! Of course it is open to the Government to say that the tranquillity at present prevailing is due to the drastic measures adopted by them. But the people of this country believe and will continue to believe, that there never was any real chance of a second mutiny and that Lala Lajpat Rai has been sacrificed to the nervous apprehension that suddenly seized the authorities. I understand that the Indian Budget debate is expected to take place in the House of Commons on the 30th instant. It is possible that Mr. Morley will throw some further light on the case of Lala Lajpat Rai on that occasion. He certainly owes this to himself not less than to the people of this country, over whose destinies for the time he presides. I think public agitation in India must now be directed for some time to securing Lala Lajpat Rai's restoration to liberty, or at any rate to securing for him an opportunity to meet the charges on which the action of the Government has been based. Mr. Morley spoke the other day of the interest which, the Indian party, who are anxious for changes in the administration of the country, undoubtedly have in the prevention of disorders. We certainly do not want any disorder in the land. But the reforms which the Viceroy and the Secretary of State are contemplating will lose their meaning for us, if they cannot be had without the deportation out of India of such earnest and high-minded workers in the country's cause as Lala Lajpat Rai.

## THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL, 1910

*On Saturday, 6th August 1910 at Simla Mr Jenkins, the Home Member, introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council the Bill to provide for the continuance of the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act 1907 and moved that the Bill be taken into consideration Gokhale, in opposing the motion spoke as follows*

### *Continuance of Law Will Delay Return to Normalcy*

My Lord, this Bill may at first sight appear to some to be a comparatively modest measure, inasmuch as all that it ostensibly seeks to do is to prolong by just five months more the life of an Act which in the natural course of things would expire on 1st November next. And the very brief speech with which the Hon'ble Member has introduced his motion today is calculated to lend support to this view. Now, my Lord, if this had been really all that the Government had in view, even then, I should have deplored the action of Government, for, as I understand the situation, what the country taken as a whole needs today above everything else is the opportunity for things quietly to settle down again to the normal, and, in providing this opportunity, responsibility rests as much on the Government as on the people. And in my humble judgment, a proposal at a time like the present to renew even for a few months a repressive measure of such exceptional severity as the Seditious Meetings Prevention Act, when the country is comparatively quiet and is getting quieter every day, is not likely to hasten that return to a normal frame of mind on the part of the people and that restoration of normal relations between the people and the Government which every true well wisher of the country must so ardently desire. But, my Lord, I do not think that this Bill is merely a proposal to continue an expiring Act for a few months longer, and nothing more. I think there are grave reasons to fear that it is rather intended to be the prelude to another proposal to place the Act permanently on the Statute book after the formality of a discussion in full Council at Calcutta next March. It seems clear to me that if the Government had been anxious to govern the country without the aid of this Act—if even they had wanted to find out if they could so govern it—they would have welcomed the opportunity, instead of regretting it, of the Act lapsing next November, conscious of the fact that, if the necessity arose, they could re-enact the measure in a single day, and re-enact it probably with the support of a strong body of public opinion. The Statement of Objects and Reasons says that 'on the unanimous advice of Local Governments, the Government of India are convinced that the continuance of the Act for the present is essential to the preservation of the peace,' and therefore they are continuing it for five months. I am not surprised, my Lord, taking human nature as it is, that the Local Governments want to retain the powers which the Act confers upon them. That does not by any means show

that the condition of the country is such that the Local Governments should have those powers. What is there, for instance, today in the condition of the Madras Presidency that should make the Government of Madras wish to have these powers? And yet we find Madras anxious along with the other Local Governments to retain these powers! It is therefore only ordinary human nature, and I do not think that we need attach any special importance to it. I wish, however, that the Council had had an opportunity of seeing those opinions of Local Governments. In the case of ordinary Bills, such opinions are as a rule supplied to Members. I asked for these papers two days ago under Rule 13 of the Rules for the conduct of legislative business; but the Government have not seen their way to comply with my request. But whatever be the grounds on which the Local Governments have based their advice, one thing is certain, that if they have asked for a continuance of the Act, they cannot have asked for its continuance for five months only; no one could, I think, calculate the requirements even of repression with such nicety! It is true that when the question comes up again for consideration, the personnel of the Government of India will have undergone a considerable change. But I do not think it is possible to find any comfort in that. In the first place, a Viceroy entirely new to the country is far less likely to take a line of his own in dealing with what we have been told is the unanimous opinion of Provincial Governments than one who has been five years in the country; and secondly, we have already before us the fact that, though not one of your Lordship's colleagues of 1907 in the Government of India is today a member of the Government—a fact which significantly illustrates the rapidity and completeness with which the personnel of the Government changes in the country under the existing system—that has not made any difference as regards the present decision to continue the Act after October next. I take it therefore that during the next Calcutta session the Government will come forward again with a proposal either to further extend the period of the Act or, what is even more probable, to place the Act permanently on the Statute-book. Now, my Lord, we all know that when once the Government have made up their mind to adopt a particular course, nothing that the non-official Members may afterwards say in Council is practically of any avail in bringing about a change in that course. Our only hope of preventing a decision which we consider to be fraught with serious injury to the best interests of the country is in any opportunity we may get to state our objections before the decision has been arrived at. And it is because the Bill before us gives us such an opportunity, as also because I am against the proposed continuance of the Act even for five months, that I deem it my duty to offer what resistance I can to the motion which the Hon'ble Member has just submitted to the Council.

*The Act Will Paralyse All Activity*

My Lord, three years ago, when this Act was hurried through the Council at this hill station, only three non-official Members were able to attend the

meeting But among those three was my distinguished friend, the profoundly learned and ever brilliant Dr Rash Behary Ghose To the criticism which he then offered on the various provisions of the measure, I think it is unnecessary to add anything even today The Act admittedly confers dangerously wide powers on the Executive, which, if used at all, are almost certain to be abused, and which must in practice paralyse all activity in the country Meanwhile, the Government already possess in the ordinary law of the land ample powers to meet all reasonable requirements, not only for punishing but also for preventing what has been called seditious or dangerous oratory Under the Criminal Procedure Code the Government can break up, and even prohibit, meetings likely to prove dangerous to the tranquillity of the country, and they can bind down individuals And the provisions for punishing seditious utterances do not certainly err on the side of leniency I really do not see what more is wanted if the Government are to show a reasonable regard for the elementary rights of the people Unless the idea is that nowhere in the country shall there be any deliberation or discussion or expression of opinion except on lines approved by the Government, and that too with their previous permission, I do not understand the necessity of arming the Executive with the vast powers which the Act confers

#### *Instances of Abuse of Powers*

That these powers can be and as a matter of fact have been used, or rather abused, for such a purpose may be seen from the fact that this year three ordinary district conferences in East Bengal were prohibited by the District Magistrates My Lord, I listened carefully to the answer which Mr Earle<sup>1</sup> gave yesterday to a question of my friend Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu<sup>2</sup> on this subject In spite of that answer, I feel bound to say that, in my opinion, the action of the authorities was not justified, and I hold that the prohibition of the conferences was a serious abuse of the powers which the Act confers upon the Executive Such conferences have been held for years past, not only in Bengal but all over the country They are strictly on constitutional lines, and so far they have nowhere given rise to any trouble whatever Mr Earle in his reply said that the prohibited conferences proposed to deal with subjects which did not concern the districts only Now I would like to know what right or authority the Hon'ble Member had to lay down a proposition like that A district is part of a Province it is also a part of the whole country, surely the people of a district, if the Government are willing to allow them even a small

<sup>1</sup> Mr (Later Sir) ARCHDALE EARLE ICS Private Secretary to Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1885) Excise Commissioner Bengal (1901), secretary Board of Revenue (1902), commissioner, Patna Division (1908 09) chairman Calcutta Corporation (1909 10), secretary, Home Department, Government of India (1910 12)

<sup>2</sup> Chairman, Reception Committee Indian National Congress (1911) elected member, first of the Bengal and then of the Imperial Legislative Council, president Indian National Congress (1914), member, Council of India

amount of patriotism or public spirit, are entitled to take an interest in the affairs of their Province and their country; and I say it is absurd to insist that a district conference should confine itself only to matters that concern that district. But, my Lord, it was not only these district conferences that were thus interfered with. In one of the districts a meeting proposed to be held by members of the depressed classes for the discussion of a social grievance was also disallowed. I understand that these classes in Eastern Bengal have some difficulty in obtaining the services of barbers, and these people wanted to hold a meeting and consider what arrangements they could make for getting themselves shaved. Surely that was not a subject in regard to which the powers conferred by the Act should have been exercised by the district authorities! And yet this was actually done under this Act. I understand that this prohibition was afterwards withdrawn. But that it should ever have been exercised shows the liability to grave abuse of these powers. In some places, the District Magistrate went the length of claiming the power to determine the actual wording of the resolutions proposed to be passed at public meetings! Such a claim reduces a public meeting to a mockery and a farce, for the resolutions then express the views not of the people assembled in the meetings but of the district authorities! My Lord, I am quite prepared to admit that circumstances may arise when even such drastic powers as the Act confers may be necessary in order to stem the flood of wild, irresponsible oratory dangerous to public peace. But I do not think that such circumstances exist at the present moment anywhere in India.

*Such " Draconian " Legislation May Be Provincial, Not All-India*

My Lord, I can conceive of circumstances in which it may be necessary to put even such powers into the hands of the Executive as the only way of checking the flood of wild and dangerous utterances that may be threatening the peace or tranquillity of the country. But I do not think such circumstances exist in any province at the present moment. And, in any case, it is to my mind intolerable that the whole country should be indiscriminately placed under such Draconian legislation. And this brings me to a suggestion which I made in the Council three years ago, when the Seditious Meetings Act was under discussion, and which I wish to repeat today, namely, that if at any time such legislation is found to be necessary in any Province it should be undertaken by the Provincial Government in the Council of that Province, and not by the Government of India for the whole country. At present what happens is this. The alleged needs of the Province whose condition is the worst furnish the standard and determine the character of the legislation with which not only that Province but the rest of the country is to be saddled. Now, this is gravely objectionable, and to my mind it constitutes a most serious grievance. A simple remedy lies ready to hand, namely, to require each Provincial Council to undertake in such matters its own special legisla-

tion according to its needs. This will have the additional advantage of ensuring a full discussion of the condition of the Province before the legislation is passed. I claim on this subject the support of the Hon'ble Member whom we in Bombay have known to be a strong advocate of Provincial decentralization. It may be said, as Sir Harvey Adamson did three years ago, that, though such legislation may be passed for the whole country, it may not be extended to a Province without a careful consideration of all its circumstances by the Government of India. How illusory this safeguard is was seen last January, when we woke up one morning to find that the Seditious Meetings Act had been extended indiscriminately to every Province by a single stroke of the pen. My Lord, I assure the Council that there is a very real fear in the minds of even the most thoroughly law abiding citizens that this Act, when put in force, places them in a position of serious danger, and they further feel that they may be exposed to the danger any moment without their having done anything to deserve it. A few utterances on the part of thoughtless young men or even a single utterance of that character may suffice for a whole district being suddenly proclaimed, and once it is so proclaimed every inhabitant of that district is at once put under what may be termed 'police rule'. No twenty persons can then meet even for the most innocent social purpose without being presumed to have gathered in a public meeting held without the permission of the authorities, and anyone may at any moment find himself accused of having taken part in such a meeting and wrongly punished or otherwise harassed in a variety of ways. And with the kind of the police we have in this country the fear of wanton or malicious harassment is not wholly imaginary.

My Lord, I am aware that the question of the character of the Indian police has now assumed a form when it is difficult to discuss it without rousing a certain amount of feeling. There is no doubt, however, that as a class the police are not trusted by the bulk of my countrymen, and that innocent people often go about in dread of what they may do, and the position has grown worse since the formation of what is known as the Criminal Investigation Department. This is largely the result of two causes—first, the quality of the material from which our police force is drawn, and secondly, the lack of a spirit of self assertion among the people generally. The Government no doubt have of late done a good deal to secure a better type of recruits for the force, but the improvement in this respect can only be gradual. Moreover, as long as the people themselves do not know how to take better care of themselves as against the police, things are bound to continue pretty much the same as they are at present. What is absolutely necessary, however, is that the Government should not put additional powers into the hands of the police until a substantial improvement has taken place in their character and traditions.

#### *Misuse of Press Act*

My Lord, it has been well said that more depends upon the manner in which a law is administered than upon the law itself. This is true of every law generally,

but it applies, I think, in a special degree to repressive measures, and I feel bound to say that our experience in this direction has not been particularly encouraging. Take, for instance, the Press Act of last February. If ever there was a measure which should have been administered with the utmost care and tact and restraint, it was the Press Act passed last session at Calcutta. This was necessary to avoid all needless irritation. It was also due to those non-official Members of this Council who, in their desire not to add to the difficulties and anxieties with which the Government were then confronted, tried to go as far as they could in support of the measure. I grieve to say, however, that in most Provinces these obvious considerations have not been kept in view in working the Act. I will not now refer to those cases in which security was demanded from old concerns when they presented themselves for a mere formal change in their registration, in spite of distinct pledges to the contrary given both in the Statement of Objects and Reasons and in the speeches of Members of Government in this Council. It was no doubt the result of what must be regarded as defective drafting, and I am glad to note that it has now been set right to a great extent by executive action on the part of Government. But there have been cases in which heavy securities have been demanded from old concerns without specifying what their offence was, and for some time past a regular sedition-hunt has been going on in some of the Provinces. Hardly a day now passes without some obscure sheet or pamphlet or old book being dragged forth from oblivion, and notified first by one Provincial Government and then by another as forfeit to the authorities. Now much of this is, to my mind, altogether futile, and it only tends to keep the Press Act in unnecessary and unpleasant prominence before the country. I think the exceptional powers conferred by the Press Act should be very sparingly drawn upon, and then, too, to meet only serious cases of objectionable and dangerous writing. I do not deny that the Act has exercised a restraining influence in some quarters where such influence was most necessary. But as against this we must place the irritation that is being continuously caused in the country owing to the feeling that the Act is being harshly or unjustly applied. The worst case in which the powers of the Act have been clearly misapplied is, to my mind, that of Mr. Mackarness's<sup>1</sup> pamphlet. Mr. Mackarness had sent me a copy when the pamphlet was issued, and I had also seen the articles as they had at first appeared in the *Nation*. I can understand the objection that Mr. Mackarness had made a one-sided presentment of the case, or that he had not done justice to the efforts which the Government have recently been making in the matter of police reform, but that only means that someone else should have published a pamphlet in reply. Had anybody told me before the pamphlet was proscribed that the Government contemplated applying

<sup>1</sup> Mr. F. C. MACKARNESS, M. P. (Liberal); advocate, Cape Supreme Court (1882); professor of Roman-Dutch Law, University College, London (1905-6); greatly interested in Indian affairs.

the provisions of the Press Act to it, I should have declined to believe the statement. And now that the pamphlet has actually been proscribed, I can only regard the action taken with deep humiliation and pain.

*Not Coercion, but Conciliation and Sympathy Essential*

My Lord, it will, I am convinced, be a grave blunder to place the Seditious Meetings Act permanently on the Statute-book or to propose a further lease of life to it after March next, and I earnestly implore the Government to abandon the idea if they have it. In 1907, when the Act was first passed, there was this to be said in its favour, that the situation in the country was daily growing more and more anxious and no one knew where things stood or whither they were drifting. We were then moving on the upward grade of our troubles and the outlook was dark and threatening. Today, however, the situation is far different. The air has been largely cleared, there is a much easier feeling throughout the country, and there is no doubt that the country is now on the downward grade of its anxieties. The change has principally resulted from two causes: first, the Reform Scheme in its final form, which despite obvious imperfections constitutes an important step forward for my countrymen, has eased in no small measure the tension of the situation, and secondly, the criminal excesses of thoughtless young men have shocked the bulk of the people into a greater realization of their own duty to the cause of law and order. I think, my Lord, it is now duly becoming more and more clear that the wild elements which by their reckless careering have been a source of so much anxiety, have now well-nigh exhausted themselves, and the return of the country to a normal state of things is therefore now only a question of time, and nothing, I respectfully urge, should be done by the Government which will in any way retard this return. Not the heavy hand of coercion, but the gentle touch of conciliation and sympathy, of forbearance and oblivion—this is what the situation requires, and I earnestly trust these healing influences will be forthcoming in ample measure to obliterate bitter memories and start the country again on a career of prosperity and progress.

*After the official motion that the Bill be passed had been carried Gokhale pointed out that this should have been a separate motion. He said*

My Lord, the question has been put to the meeting, but this should have been a separate motion. The speeches up to now have been on the motion that the Bill should be taken into consideration, and there is an official motion that the Bill should be passed. I wanted to say a few words as to that.

MR JENKINS: My motion was that I introduced the Bill, and I moved that it be passed.

GOKHALE: I do not wish to take more than a minute, but I do think I must



complain of the tone of the opening remarks of the Hon'ble Mr. Jenkins.<sup>1</sup> I do not think that any officer of Government has any reason to be bored to death or anything else if he wants to discharge his duties properly here, because we have also to discharge our duties here, and I do not think anything is gained by introducing such a tone into the debates in this Council. My Lord, you have done so much to introduce a new tone in this Council; you have watched over this Council with the care with which a parent watches over the interests of her child. I do not think that Mr. Jenkins is justified in introducing such a tone here.

<sup>1</sup> Gokhale's complaint obviously refers to the following remarks made by Mr. Jenkins moving that the Bill be passed. He said : Your Excellency, I am a newcomer on this Council and I must admit that my head is not sufficiently inured to the stream of oratory which has been poured upon it today, but it has at least given me a very lively idea of what Sydney Smith means by the punishment of being preached to death by wild curates. I hope, however, that in course of time I may become a hardened toper at the fountain of eloquence.

## THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS BILL, 1911.

*On Thursday, 16th March 1911, the Home Member, Mr Jenkins, moved for leave to introduce a " Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the prevention of public meetings likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance of the public tranquillity " The leave having been granted, the motion for the reference of the Bill to a Select Committee immediately followed and was duly carried At this stage Gokhale intervened with the following observations*

My Lord, I do not wish to say more than a word at this stage of the Bill, but I deem it my duty to state, on my own behalf and on behalf of several of my colleagues here, that we view with great regret the decision of the Government to re enact this legislation and to re enact it as part of the permanent statute of the country

The Hon'ble Member has told us that the new Bill is in many respects different from the old Act, and as far as I have been able to gather from his explanation, the changes seem to be important That being so, it is due to the Government that no opinion should be expressed at this meeting I only beg leave to say this, that following the usual practice which is adopted in this Council whenever Bills are introduced without previous publication, both the principle and the details of the Bill should be open to discussion when the Report of the Select Committee comes up for consideration

His Excellency ( THE PRESIDENT LORD HARDINGE ) There will be no objection, in my opinion, to the discussion of the principle of the Bill at a later stage in view of the exceptional procedure which is today adopted and in view of the fact that Hon'ble Members have not yet really had an opportunity of studying the provisions of the Bill

(The Bill was then introduced and a Select Committee which included Gokhale was appointed )

*On Monday, 20th March 1911, Mr Jenkins moved that the Report of the Select Committee be taken into consideration Gokhale in opposing the motion, spoke as follows*

My Lord, it is with considerable reluctance and regret that I rise to take part in today's discussion I had hoped, like so many of my friends, that the occasion for this discussion would not arise, that in view of the great improvement, which has taken place in the general situation of the country, and to which Mr Jenkins bore testimony the other day, the Government would not consider it necessary to prolong this legislation, and that in any case they would not seek to place the measure permanently on the Statute book As, however, the Government have come to the conclusion that they must continue to have this weapon in their armoury, and have it permanently, those who

are unable to acquiesce in this view have no choice but express their dissent, and that is why I must trouble the Council with a few observations.

*No Immediate Need for this Legislation*

My Lord, I do not propose to approach this question from the standpoint of abstract principles. Far be it from me to underrate the importance of abstract principles. Abstract principles are usually derived from the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages, and in stimulating generous sentiment, in sustaining high ideals, and in lighting the path of life over dark and difficult ground, they are of inestimable value. But no thinker has ever urged that mere abstract principles should guide us, without reference to the circumstances amidst which they have to be applied. Thus the abstract principle of freedom of speech must be taken in relation to the circumstances amidst which that freedom is claimed; and I am quite willing to concede that the theoretical objection to any proposed legislation that it restricts the right of free speech must be further supported by an examination of its practical consequences before it can be regarded as conclusive. But, my Lord, just as the right of free speech is an abstract right, so also the proposition that all loyal citizens must rally round the executive in maintaining law and order is an abstract proposition, and its value as a guide for practical conduct must depend upon the circumstances amidst which it is sought to be applied. I think, my Lord, when loyal citizens are called upon to rally to the support of the Government in any measures it considers necessary to maintain law and order, two questions have to be considered. First, what is the danger against which the Government wants to take measures, and secondly, what is the character of the measures which the Government wants to take? And this again leads us to another enquiry. Is the need of the Government urgent and immediate, or is the Government anxious only to take precautionary measures? If the need of the Government is urgent and immediate, then of course all ordinary considerations must be put aside, and every loyal citizen must range himself on the side of the Government in sanctioning and enforcing the measures that are thought to be indispensable. In a state of actual disturbance, in a state of dangerous activity on the part of elements hostile to the very existence of the Government, I can understand the Government calling on all loyal citizens to rally round it in this manner. But where the measures contemplated are more precautionary than required to meet an urgent and immediate situation, where the measures contemplated are more against possible developments in the future than any present need, there, I venture to think, that a different set of considerations apply. Now, my Lord, it is freely admitted that the present situation of the country is not of a character to demand such legislation for immediate use. We have been told that very probably this law — when the Bill becomes law — will not be put into force at all in the near future. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the need of the Government is urgent and immediate, and

we are entitled to take it that the measure is intended to serve the purpose of a precautionary measure

*Law Likely to be Misused by District Authorities*

Let us, therefore, examine the measure as a precautionary measure. And here there are two standpoints from which it may be viewed—one, the standpoint of the Government, and the other, that of the representatives of the public who are called upon to assist the Government in such legislation. The Government naturally, in passing a precautionary measure, has, first of all, to consider how it can be made effective. A measure like this is not worth having unless it is reasonably effective. The representatives of the public on the other hand have first of all got to consider, since there is no immediate danger to be met, what harm is likely to result if the powers conferred by the measure are abused, and how to prevent such possible abuses. No one can deny that abuses are possible, even in regard to most carefully framed measures. Now, my Lord, so far as the effectiveness of this measure is concerned, I will freely admit, what has indeed been already admitted by so many of my Hon'ble friends, that, from the standpoint of the Government, it could not have introduced a milder measure than this. The more objectionable features of the Act of 1907 have been removed, and if, when the need arises, this law is applied with reasonable care and caution, it is not likely to produce any serious hardship. I am free to admit that at once, and I do not think there is any difference of opinion on that point. But while the Government may claim to have removed from the old law its harsher features, we here, who represent the public, that will have to come under this law, have also got to consider what will happen if the powers which this law confers are abused, and from that standpoint, my Lord, I submit, that, though a great deal of cargo has been thrown out of the vessel, still, enough remains to fill our minds with apprehension. Let us, my Lord, take the case of an area which comes to be proclaimed under this law. It is quite true that the Government of India will have first to extend the notification to the province, it is quite true that the Local Government will have next to proclaim the area, and that, too, now, after first obtaining the sanction of the Governor-General in Council, but after all, in the last analysis, it is the opinion of local officers that will generally prevail in these matters. If the local officers strongly hold that a particular area is developing a dangerous activity—whether it is actually doing so or not is a different question—if the local officers think so, the Local Government, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will endorse that view, and when the Local Government urges this view upon the Government of India, I think it is very improbable that the Government of India will refuse to extend this law to that particular province and that particular area. Therefore, my Lord, in the last resort, it is the opinion of local officers that will really prevail, and when once an area has been placed under this law, the Local Government and the Government of India will, so to say, be out of it, and it is the district authorities

that will then apply the law and stand face to face with the people.

Now, my Lord, I do not wish to make any general or sweeping observations about district officers. The district authorities of this country try to do their duty as conscientiously as any body of human beings, similarly circumstanced, can do; and they have their exceptional and their average men. There are in their ranks some who are exceptionally high-minded and conscientious; a large number who merely take a routine view of things, and do what they consider to be their duty without considering how it will affect the people; and some who are intolerant of all criticism and who certainly will not hesitate to use the powers which a law like this will confer on them, in order to put down all political agitation, whatever its necessity or character. And I distinctly fear that in an area proclaimed under this law, there is no small likelihood of these exceptional powers being abused. It must be borne in mind that district authorities, in their turn, are dependent for their information upon the police and it is well known that the police of the country as a class are feared and not trusted. Therefore there is a serious danger that the powers under this Act may be abused; and since there is this liability to abuse, it becomes necessary for the representatives of the people in this Council to consider what should be their attitude towards a measure of this kind.

My Lord, I have considered this question long and anxiously, not only in connection with this particular measure, but also on other occasions, which have arisen in the past, as to what should be our attitude towards the repressive measures which the Government comes to consider as necessary. The position, briefly, is this. The Government of India considers certain legislation to be necessary in order that certain evils, actual or anticipated, should be coped with properly. The Government's intentions, of course, are beyond question. The Government only wants the remedy to be applied to the evils and does not want any excessive zeal on the part of any of their officers. If the non-official Members of this Council take only the intentions of Government into consideration and raise no objection to the proposed legislation, they become responsible for that legislation along with the Government. As soon, however, as the legislation is passed, the matter gets out of the hands of the Government of India; and wherever the legislation happens to be enforced, every officer who administers the law comes to be armed not only with the spirit of the law but also with the letter of the law. And, then, when abuses occur, non-official Members, who have been assenting parties to the legislation, find themselves placed in a very awkward position. I will illustrate my meaning by what occurred last year in connection with the Press Bill. Last year, when the Government of India introduced a drastic Press law, it was a time of considerable anxiety for the Government. And if ever the Government was entitled to the co-operation of the people in repressive measures, it was at that time. A generous measure of Council reform had been conceded and when the new Council was about to meet, a diabolical murder had taken place here in the very precincts of the High Court. The time was such that every

generous sentiment urged one not to judge the proposals of Government in any very critical spirit. When the Government brought forward its measure, ample material was laid before the Select Committee, which satisfied many of us that in several parts of the country, a section of the Press habitually went beyond all reasonable bounds and needed to be controlled, and that if the Government were to rely merely on ordinary prosecutions, the evil was most difficult to deal with. When, therefore, it was proposed that some executive action within certain limits should be tried to cope with the situation, several Members of this Council came to the conclusion that we should not stand in the way. And when the Bill came up before the Council we did not oppose it, and practically gave a sort of reluctant assent to the measure. If ever, therefore, there was a measure, which should have been enforced with care and caution, it was that Press Bill. Apart from the fact that a harsh enforcement of the measure was liable to turn the feeling of the people against Government, this special caution was due to those non official Members who at a difficult time had come forward to range themselves on the side of Government. There was never any doubt about the intentions of the Government of India. We were assured, both in private conversations and in the speeches of Members of the Government in this Council, that the law would be applied only to extreme cases, that the past would be wiped off the slate, and that the measure would be enforced only in the case of new and serious offences. And in waiving our opposition to the measure, we permitted ourselves to believe that the remedy would be tried in that spirit. As soon, however, as the Bill was passed, Magistrates in all parts of the country started enforcing the provisions in the harshest manner, and the worst cases occurred, I am sorry to say, in my own province, Bombay. For the most paltry reasons, security came to be demanded, with the result that even thoughtful men, who deplored the excesses of the Press, turned violently against those who had stood by the Government in the matter. I know the Members of the Government were themselves distressed to see this abuse of the Press Act. Sir Herbert Risley<sup>1</sup> who had introduced the measure, had gone, but Sir Harold Stuart,<sup>2</sup> the Home Secretary was here. I had a talk with him on the matter, and I know he was deeply grieved that this harassing overzeal was being displayed by Magistrates, who were enforcing the letter and not the spirit of the law. The difficulty, my Lord, in such matters is that it is impossible to communicate properly on paper the intentions of the Government of India even to the Local Governments, and further, if even it is found possible to do so, these intentions do not travel beyond the Local Governments, and hundreds of Magistrates all over the country, who come to be armed with the powers conferred by the law, do not

<sup>1</sup> The then Home Member, Government of India

<sup>2</sup> SIR HAROLD STUART, I.C.S., superintendent, Census Operations Madras (1891) Inspector-General of Police, Madras (1893), Director, Criminal Intelligence Department (1904) member, Imperial Legislative Council (1903), secretary, Police Commission (1902-3), member, Madras executive council

think of the intentions or do not know anything about them. When I went back to Bombay last March, after the session of this Council was over, I found that the position of some of us had become, owing to the abuses of the Press law, almost intolerable; and this not merely in the eyes of those who were in the habit of talking wildly, but even of those who wanted us to give a reasonable sort of support to the Government; so much so that I thought it necessary to ask for an interview with His Excellency the Governor of Bombay and lay the whole matter personally before him. Sir George Clarke<sup>1</sup> entered into our feelings at once, and with that readiness which has always characterised him to look into grievances brought personally to his notice, he promised to set the matter right at once; and then the orders were issued, which stopped the whole scandal.

*Much Depends on Executive Administration*

My Lord, the fear of such experience always weighs us down. We are quite willing to accept the statement of the intentions of the Government of India, as made known here. And we know that the Government of India has no other object in view than to put down the evils complained of. We know also that Local Governments will try to carry out those intentions to the best of their ability and as far as they understand them. But it is not the Government of India nor the Local Governments that ultimately exercise the powers; it is local officers, scattered all over the country; and these officers, according to individual idiosyncracies, will interpret the law and enforce it. The whole question, therefore, is not so much a question of legislation as of executive administration. It has often been said—it is really a mere truism—that more depends upon the manner in which a law is administered than upon the law itself. And in the executive administration of the country we have absolutely no voice. If, in enforcing this law, non-official men were first consulted by district authorities, if their advice was sought beforehand, then there would be some safeguard against an abuse of these powers. If, for instance, district officers were to have round them district councils, as has often been suggested, and they were to put the powers of such law into force with the advice of the district councils, there would be some guarantee that no improper exercise or abuse of those powers, whether due to ignorance or excess of zeal, would occur. But as long as we have no opportunity of making our wishes known in the executive administration of the country, so long it becomes an exceedingly difficult matter for us to accept the responsibility which associating ourselves with the Government in such measures brings to us.

<sup>1</sup> SIR GEORGE SYDENHAM CLARKE, BARON SYDENHAM OF COMBE (1848-1933), Royal Engineer; took part in the Egyptian expedition (1882) and the Eastern Sudan campaign (1885); superintendent, Royal Carriage Department at Woolwich Arsenal (1894-1901); member, War Office Reconstitution Committee (1903); Governor of Victoria (1901-03); Governor of Bombay (1907-1913).

My Lord, after a great deal of consideration, I have come to the conclusion that while things are as they are today, our co-operation with the Government cannot ordinarily go beyond two classes of measures — constructive measures taken for the moral and material well-being of the people, and measures urgently and immediately necessary to deal with actual or threatened disturbances. I will illustrate my meaning by an analogy drawn from the question of military expenditure. If war or invasion were threatened, I think, whatever our views about military expenditure may be, we all should be willing to come forward and support the Government in any measures — even extra taxation — which the Government might consider necessary to cope effectively with the danger, but that is in an abnormal and extraordinary state of things. In normal conditions we should jealously scrutinise our military expenditure and urge the Government to keep it within reasonable limits. In the same manner, where an abnormal situation as regards the maintenance of law and order in the country arises, we should brush aside all ordinary considerations and come to the support of Government in any measures that are really necessary for putting down or preventing disorder. After all, we do not want any sedition in this country any more than the Government does. Our hopes for the future are bound up with the peaceful maintenance of British rule, and in all measures, reasonably necessary for the maintenance of that rule, and reasonably applied, the Government is entitled to our co-operation and support. But there is the difficulty which I have spoken of, where measures are taken as mere precautionary measures, not required by any immediate necessities, but simply to guard against possible developments in the future. And I have come to the conclusion that, in view of the possibility of abuse, we must leave the responsibility for such measures to the Government. I admit that, as the responsibility for peace and order is primarily with the Government, the judgment of the Government must prevail in the end in such matters, but as the Government has the power to enforce that judgment, whether in this Council or outside, we should not be expected ordinarily to assent to the exercise of that power, and no occasion for complaint arises if we prefer to stand aside.

### *Plea for "Provincial" Legislation*

I will now say a few words on the Bill before us, and then resume my seat. I do not wish to go into the details of this measure. That has been done by many of my Hon'ble friends and I do not think anything has been left to be said on the subject. It is admitted freely that the Government has removed from the old Act its more objectionable features, and that, if an Act must be passed, the Government could not have made it milder. But I must urge again, what I urged at Simla in 1907 and what I also urged last year, that legislation in such matters should be passed in Provincial Councils and not in the Imperial Council. My Lord, I think it is unfair to everybody — unfair to the Government of India, unfair to the Members of this Council, unfair to the whole



country — that such legislation should be passed here. The only justification for such measures is the prevalence of an exceptional state of things, and unless such a state of things is general throughout the country, a province which wants to be armed with exceptional powers should seek to pass the necessary legislation in its own Council. As most provinces possess their own Legislative Councils, there is no reason why the Government of India should ask this Council to accept a responsibility which should be borne by Local Councils. When the Government of India passes such legislation for the whole country, it gives rise to a feeling of general irritation, and the irritation is greatest in those provinces which need the special legislation the least. A province that is disturbed recognizes more or less the need for some measure of the kind; but the provinces that are in a normal condition feel that they have been badly treated. Moreover, it is impossible here, whether in Select Committee or in Council, to consider all the circumstances of the different provinces, whereas, if a province which needed these extraordinary powers were called upon to legislate for itself, the circumstances of that province would be discussed with full knowledge by Members, both official and non-official, before a final judgment is arrived at. It has been stated that all the Local Governments are in favour of placing this legislation permanently on the Statute-book. I do not think, however, that that goes far. No Local Government, or for the matter of that no authority, would like to relinquish the powers which it already enjoys. A clear illustration of this is furnished by what has happened in the Rhotak district in the Punjab. When the proclamation of Rhotak was about to expire, the Deputy Commissioner of Rhotak and the Commissioner of the Division strongly urged its renewal. The Lieutenant-Governor would not agree to that — at the same time he is unwilling to let this Act expire. Thus each authority wants to keep the powers which it possesses, and it is not strange that all Local Governments have expressed themselves in favour of the permanent retention of the Act.

*Temporary Measure Would Have Served Government's Purpose*

My Lord, if the Government had proposed to limit the duration<sup>1</sup> of this measure to three, four or even five years, that would have considerably altered its character. It would then have meant that the Government wanted a temporary remedy for a state of things which it did not consider quite normal. If this had been done, it would have been easier for us not to stand in the way of this Bill passing into law. My Lord, if this measure were passed for five years, what would happen? I am quite sure that in five years things will so settle down that there will be no need for this measure. When this Act was first passed in 1907, Dr. Ghose and I pointed out that by itself it would not only prove no remedy for the state of things, but that it would drive discontent

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the discussion on the Bill, Mr. Mudholkar moved an amendment seeking to limit the life of the Bill to three years. Gokhale supported the amendment.

into more violent channels, and that what the situation needed was, above all, a large and generous measure of reform. And what we had prophesied actually came true, for in April 1908 the first outbreak of violence took place in the country. In November 1908 came the gracious message from the late King, the Proclamation of 1908, and it was followed soon after by the scheme of reform, which was announced by Lord Morley in his memorable speech of December 1908 in the House of Lords. The improvement in the situation of the country has been rapid since then, and further that improvement has been continuous, and, in spite of the two detestable outrages that have recently occurred, we all feel that, taking the country as a whole, the situation every day is improving and that it will not be long before the whole thing passes away like a hideous nightmare. That being our view of the situation, we feel, my Lord, that a temporary measure would have suited the requirements of the situation much better than a permanent measure of this kind. If, on the other hand, our estimate of the situation is found to be wrong at the end of four or five years the Government has the power to renew the measure for a further period or indefinitely. There may be some little agitation to be faced, but that is a small consideration compared with the fact that, in placing this measure permanently on the Statute book just now, the Government is going against a large volume of public opinion.

#### *Limit Duration of the Measure*

My Lord, let not the Government be influenced too much by the latest outrages. They are like the dying embers of a fire that is going out. A number of young men came under unfortunate influences under circumstances over which I will not dwell, but the responsibility for which must be shared equally between the Government and the people. There is much truth in the adage that it takes two to make a quarrel. I am not however going into that, I only want to say that for three or four years a wave of wild teaching passed over the land, and under the influence of that teaching a number of youths completely *lost their heads and committed themselves to courses of conduct from which retreat was not easy*. I think it is some of these men who are still responsible for these outrages. There may be a few more outrages in the near future — no one can say — but no new additions to the ranks of these men are taking place, the supplies have been cut off, and I feel quite sure that the situation will now grow better and better every day until at last only the memory of these times is left. I therefore urge, my Lord, that the Government should reconsider this matter even at this late stage, and limit the duration of the Bill to a period of three, or even five years. If this is done, some of us, who are unable to assent to a permanent measure, may find ourselves in a position to reconsider the line which we have decided to adopt.

*On Mr Jenkins moving that the Bill, as amended be passed Gokhale said*

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country — that such legislation should be passed here. The only justification for such measures is the prevalence of an exceptional state of things, and unless such a state of things is general throughout the country, a province which wants to be armed with exceptional powers should seek to pass the necessary legislation in its own Council. As most provinces possess their own Legislative Councils, there is no reason why the Government of India should ask this Council to accept a responsibility which should be borne by Local Councils. When the Government of India passes such legislation for the whole country, it gives rise to a feeling of general irritation, and the irritation is greatest in those provinces which need the special legislation the least. A province that is disturbed recognizes more or less the need for some measure of the kind; but the provinces that are in a normal condition feel that they have been badly treated. Moreover, it is impossible here, whether in Select Committee or in Council, to consider all the circumstances of the different provinces, whereas, if a province which needed these extraordinary powers were called upon to legislate for itself, the circumstances of that province would be discussed with full knowledge by Members, both official and non-official, before a final judgment is arrived at. It has been stated that all the Local Governments are in favour of placing this legislation permanently on the Statute-book. I do not think, however, that that goes far. No Local Government, or for the matter of that no authority, would like to relinquish the powers which it already enjoys. A clear illustration of this is furnished by what has happened in the Rhotak district in the Punjab. When the proclamation of Rhotak was about to expire, the Deputy Commissioner of Rhotak and the Commissioner of the Division strongly urged its renewal. The Lieutenant-Governor would not agree to that — at the same time he is unwilling to let this Act expire. Thus each authority wants to keep the powers which it possesses, and it is not strange that all Local Governments have expressed themselves in favour of the permanent retention of the Act.

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My Lord, if the Government had proposed to limit the duration<sup>1</sup> of this measure to three, four or even five years, that would have considerably altered its character. It would then have meant that the Government wanted a temporary remedy for a state of things which it did not consider quite normal. If this had been done, it would have been easier for us not to stand in the way of this Bill passing into law. My Lord, if this measure were passed for five years, what would happen? I am quite sure that in five years things will so settle down that there will be no need for this measure. When this Act was first passed in 1907, Dr. Ghose and I pointed out that by itself it would not only prove no remedy for the state of things, but that it would drive discontent

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the discussion on the Bill, Mr. Mudholkar moved an amendment seeking to limit the life of the Bill to three years. Gokhale supported the amendment.

into more violent channels, and that what the situation needed was, above all, a large and generous measure of reform. And what we had prophesied actually came true, for in April 1908 the first outbreak of violence took place in the country. In November 1908 came the gracious message from the late King, the Proclamation of 1908, and it was followed soon after by the scheme of reform, which was announced by Lord Morley in his memorable speech of December 1908 in the House of Lords. The improvement in the situation of the country has been rapid since then and further that improvement has been continuous, and, in spite of the two detestable outrages that have recently occurred, we all feel that, taking the country as a whole, the situation every day is improving and that it will not be long before the whole thing passes away like a hideous nightmare. That being our view of the situation, we feel, my Lord, that a temporary measure would have suited the requirements of the situation much better than a permanent measure of this kind. If, on the other hand, our estimate of the situation is found to be wrong at the end of four or five years the Government has the power to renew the measure for a further period or indefinitely. There may be some little agitation to be faced, but that is a small consideration compared with the fact that, in placing this measure permanently on the Statute book just now, the Government is going against a large volume of public opinion.

#### *Limit Duration of the Measure*

My Lord, let not the Government be influenced too much by the latest outrages. They are like the dying embers of a fire that is going out. A number of young men came under unfortunate influences under circumstances over which I will not dwell, but the responsibility for which must be shared equally between the Government and the people. There is much truth in the adage that it takes two to make a quarrel. I am not however going into that, I only want to say that for three or four years a wave of wild teaching passed over the land, and under the influence of that teaching a number of youths completely lost their heads and committed themselves to courses of conduct from which retreat was not easy. I think it is some of these men who are still responsible for these outrages. There may be a few more outrages in the near future — no one can say — but no new additions to the ranks of these men are taking place, the supplies have been cut off, and I feel quite sure that the situation will now grow better and better every day until at last only the memory of these times is left. I therefore urge, my Lord, that the Government should reconsider this matter even at this late stage, and limit the duration of the Bill to a period of three, or even five years. If this is done, some of us, who are unable to assent to a permanent measure, may find ourselves in a position to reconsider the line which we have decided to adopt.

*On Mr Jenkins moving that the Bill, as amended be passed, Gokhale said*

My Lord, before this motion is put to the vote I would like to make a few

observations that have been rendered necessary by certain remarks which have fallen from my Hon'ble friend Mr. Ali Imam in the course of the somewhat exuberant support that he gave to this Bill. My Hon'ble friend marched through his speech, brandishing his sword high over his head, and dealing blows right and left at all and sundry, without considering whether they were really needed. However, I do not wish to refer to these attacks. But I feel I must remove some misapprehensions which are likely to be caused by what the Hon'ble Member has said with reference to my position last year over the Press Bill and my position today over the Seditious Meetings Bill. Before doing that, however, I hope my Hon'ble friend will let me remind him gently—and in this my Hon'ble friend Mr. Mudholkar has already anticipated me—that the word 'Opposition' is really not applicable to non-official Members sitting in this Council. I know that my Hon'ble friend meant to be complimentary when he spoke of me as the 'leader of the Opposition', but we are far away yet from the time when the Government Members will exchange places with private Members in this Council, and until that time comes there can be no regular Opposition here, as the term is understood in Western countries. As a matter of fact, we support the Government here more often than we oppose it; and if, on any occasion, we have to differ, it is simply owing to our conscientious conviction that the view of the Government is not correct. I hope, therefore, that his description will not again be applied to us in future.

My Lord, it was unfortunate that the Hon'ble Member had made up his mind as to what he was going to say before he had heard my speech; and therefore though I explained—I hope clearly—the difference between my attitude towards the Press Bill of last year and my position this year as regards the Seditious Meetings Bill, the Hon'ble Member did not take note of that explanation. My Lord, the Hon'ble Member was not fair to me when he said that last year I supported the Press Bill, though it was a permanent measure. In my minute of dissent appended to the Select Committee's Report, in the speech which I made when the Report of the Select Committee came up for consideration in this Council, and finally when amendments were moved—at all stages I most strongly urged that the Bill should be limited to three years only. I may further state that, even as regards the Press Bill, I never said that I supported the Bill. All I said was that I did not feel justified in opposing the Bill. These were the precise words I used: "That in view of the situation that exists in several parts of the country, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I should not be justified in opposing the principle of this Bill." I pointed out throughout the risks of that law, and I urged again and again that it was of the utmost importance that it should be temporary. Finally, when the time for moving amendments came, I moved an amendment that the law should be limited to three years: and I may mention that up to the last moment—and I think this is within the knowledge of many Hon'ble Members who were then present—there was some uncertainty as to whether

the Government would or would not accept the proposal, and as a matter of fact, before my amendment was put to the vote and lost, the Hon'ble Sir Herbert Risley, who was in charge of the Bill, went up to the Viceroy, and asked him before us all if he was to accept the amendment; thus up to the last moment there was a chance of our proposal being accepted, and we were influenced in our attitude largely by that hope. However, that, my Lord, is a small matter.

The real difference between that Press Bill and this Seditious Meetings Bill, which the Hon'ble Member does not seem to realize, is this — under the Press Bill, only the man who actually writes takes the consequences. If a writer exercises reasonable care, keeps himself within certain limits, and writes with due restraint, there would probably be no trouble in his case. But under the Seditious Meetings Bill, while one or two men may make wild speeches in an area, once the area is proclaimed, all the people in that area are placed indiscriminately under the ban. And, in fact, the less objectionable a man's opinions are, the more he is sure to feel the hardship of this law. Take the place from which I come — Poona. Suppose there are some wild speeches made there, as may happen on any day, and Poona is proclaimed under this law, what happens? The men who will have brought down this on Poona will probably keep quiet, but all the rest of us, who are pursuing our ordinary activities, shall find ourselves placed under this new law, having to give notice of every meeting that we hold, having to obtain permission beforehand in certain cases, and being liable on occasions to be charged with holding meetings surreptitiously. My Lord, the Hon'ble Member is now a Member of the Government, but he comes from the mufassal and has had personal experience of the mufassal in the past, and he should know that in the mufassal fear of what the police may do is very real. I come from Poona, a mufassal place in the Bombay Presidency, and I can assure the Council that we have very real fear that the police might cause trouble without cause. I have got that fear myself and everybody whom I know has got that fear, and I think it is only fair that the Government should know that this fear is entertained. My Lord, the Hon'ble Member says that this law keeps the police out. When I asked him on whose information the District Magistrate would act, he interpreted my suggestion as if it was a wholesale denunciation of the Civil Service. Nothing, however, was further from my mind. He himself must feel that it was not a fair interpretation to put upon my words, because I had taken care in my speech not to give room for such an interpretation. I had said that the district authorities were, like similar bodies of men, composed of persons, many of them average, some exceptional, and therefore my query could not be construed as a denunciation of the whole Civil Service. My Lord, the police are not out of this Bill. The District Magistrate will act — indeed must act — on the confidential reports that he receives from the Criminal Investigation Department and other Police officers. You may say that he will examine these reports carefully and try to arrive at an impartial judgment. He may do so, but mistakes will take place as they have taken place in the past. You cannot



avoid making mistakes in such positions. Last year, when certain District Conferences were stopped in Eastern Bengal, when even a meeting of the depressed classes was prohibited, what was the justification ? In my humble opinion, these prohibitions were undoubted abuses of the powers under this Act. I do not know what view the Hon'ble Member holds about those orders, but these things are likely to happen again in proclaimed areas.

My Lord, my Hon'ble friend quoted from a description which I gave last year of the state of the country, when I said that I did not want to stand in the way of the Government trying the remedy of executive action in regard to the writings in a section of the Press. But, my Lord, the Hon'ble Member ignores the difference between the Press and the Platform. In the Press, a man can do mischief from day to day without being noticed. Who is going to notice ordinary writings, unless there is something sensational to attract attention ? But you cannot hold seditious meetings without attracting the attention of all. The Press and the Platform, therefore, as instruments of sedition, do not stand on the same level. Apart from that, however, the position last year was undoubtedly different from what it is today. I have already stated in my observations on this Bill that after the introduction of reforms in December 1908, a rapid improvement began : those who have had experience of the time before and after, will, I feel sure, corroborate what I say. The Press Bill, however, came up within less than two months after the introduction of the reforms, and much time had not elapsed for things to settle down. And when I spoke of the state of certain parts of the country at that time, I did feel that the air was charged in many places with anti-English ideas, and I did say that it was necessary in our own interests that it should be cleared of those ideas. And that was why I did not want to stand in the way of the Press Bill being tried. But, my Lord, the situation has vastly improved since then, and were it not for the two recent, miserable outrages, I am quite sure there would have been but one opinion even in this Council, that there was no comparison between the state of things a year ago and today. These outrages, however, should not be allowed unduly to influence the mind of the Government. In any case that is my view, and I respectfully submit it to the consideration of the Council.

## THE PRESS ACT

*On Tuesday, 8th February 1910, the Press Bill, which had been introduced by Sir Herbert Risley, the acting Home Member, at the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on Friday, 4th February 1910 and referred to a Select Committee, which included Gokhale was taken up for consideration by the Council Gokhale made the following speech on the occasion*

### *Press Bill a Cruel Irony of Fate*

My Lord, it is a cruel irony of fate that the first important measure that comes before the Reformed Council is a measure to curtail a great and deeply cherished privilege which the country has enjoyed, with two brief interruptions, for three-quarters of a century. But while the plans of statesmen have matured slowly, events designed by malignant fates to frustrate their purpose have moved faster. And thus we find that just when the scheme of reforms has materialised, the sky is dark with clouds which probably will roll away before long, but which for the time wear a threatening aspect. My Lord, I confess that the regret with which I approach a consideration of this Bill has been deepened by the fact that the measure is being hurried through its several stages by suspending the standing orders and without giving the country practically any opportunity to express its opinion on it. In saying this, I do not forget the fact that Lord Lytton's<sup>1</sup> Act of 1878<sup>2</sup> was introduced and passed at one sitting, nor do I overlook the consideration shown by your Lordship, after deciding to suspend the standing orders, in giving us at least these three days for consideration and in referring the Bill to a Select Committee. But, my Lord, was this unusual procedure necessary? Surely a week or ten days' delay in enacting this measure would not have made any appreciable difference to anybody, since the Bill seeks to apply to the situation what at best can only be a slow remedy. However, I do not wish to pursue this point further, I might not have said even this much, had it not been for the fact that the Government has been reproached in certain quarters for giving us even these three days.

<sup>1</sup> Viceroy and Governor General of India (1876-80)

<sup>2</sup> The Vernacular Press Act, as it is known, was passed on March 14, 1878. It empowered a magistrate, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, to "require the printer or publisher of any such newspaper to enter into a bond, binding himself not to print or publish in such newspaper anything likely to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government, or antipathy between persons of different races, castes, religions, or sects, and not to use such paper for purposes of extortion."

*No Need for the Bill*

My Lord, in the minute of dissent which my Hon'ble friend Mr. Mudholkar<sup>1</sup> and I have appended to the Report of the Select Committee, we have briefly stated our position in regard to this measure. That position I would like to amplify in the few minutes for which I propose to occupy the attention of the Council. It is admitted on all hands—the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill has admitted it in his speech—that the Penal Code is amply sufficient to punish sedition and that the special legislation of last year can effectively put down incitements to violence. What is contended however is that the punishment of seditious writings and utterances under the Penal Code, so far from restricting the area of sedition, actually widens it by reason of the unhealthy excitement it causes and keeps up for months the rush of natural sympathy of the public to the accused, the crown of martyrdom that comes to be placed on their heads and the amount of odium which the proceedings bring to the Government. And it is urged that the Government is convinced that the right plan to deal with sedition is to proceed by way of prevention rather than by way of punishment. Now, my Lord, I will at once admit that there is considerable force in the whole of this contention. But even so, section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code which is a means of prevention and which was introduced into the Code twelve years ago for the express purpose of placing such a means at the disposal of the Government, should have been sufficient, and what I cannot quite understand is why it has not been found effective. The only explanation I have heard is that the proceeding under that section being judicial and liable to revision by the High Court, it practically means a trial for sedition with this difference only that the person proceeded against, instead of being severely sentenced, is merely called upon to give security. But this was precisely the chief merit claimed for the section when it was enacted in 1898, as a reference to the proceedings of the Council of that time will show. My Lord, I cannot help saying that it would have been fairer to the Legislature if the Government had tried section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code in some cases, instead of allowing it to remain practically a dead letter, before applying for fresh powers. Or if it was considered that the time had gone by when the section, as it stood, could be usefully applied—I myself am inclined to think that in some parts of the country the evil has now gone beyond the stage where section 108 could be applied with much effect—a proposal to amend the section so as to make its operation more simple and expeditious would have caused less disturbance to our ideas on this subject and would undoubtedly have been more acceptable.

<sup>1</sup> RANGANATH NARASIMHA MUDHOLKAR (1857-1921), secretary, Berar Sarvajanik Sabha (1886-98); joined the Indian National Congress (1898); general secretary, Indian Industrial Conference from its start and president of its fourth session (1903); president, Indian National Congress (1912).

*Demand for 3-year life for the Bill*

My Lord, the principal addition which the Bill makes to the powers already possessed by the Government for dealing with sedition is that it makes the taking of security from printing presses and newspapers a purely executive act. It also empowers the Executive to order the forfeiture of such security and even the confiscation of printing presses on the ground that an offence has been committed, though here an appeal is allowed to a Special Tribunal of High Court Judges. These are the main provisions and they embody what may be called the principle of the Bill. My Lord, in ordinary times I should have deemed it my duty to resist such proposals to the utmost of my power. The risks involved in them are grave and obvious. But in view of the situation that exists in several parts of the country today, I have reluctantly come, after a careful and anxious consideration, to the conclusion that I should not be justified in opposing the principle of this Bill. It is not merely the assassinations that have taken place, or the conspiracies that have come to light, or the political dacoities that are being committed, that fill me with anxiety. The air in many places is still thick with ideas that are undoubtedly antagonistic to the unquestioned continuance of British rule, with which our hopes of a peaceful evolution are bound up, and this is a feature of the situation quite as serious as anything else. Several causes have contributed to produce this result, of which the writings in a section of the Press have been one. And to the extent to which a remedy can be applied to these writings by such executive action as is contemplated in the Bill, I am not prepared to say that the remedy should not be applied. There is no doubt that even if the powers conferred by the Bill are exercised judiciously, some inconvenience and even hardship is inevitable to well intentioned concerns. And if the powers are not exercised with care, great harm is bound to follow. Moreover, as long as this law continues in force, even the best Indian concerns must work in an atmosphere of uncertainty and apprehension. But all these risks may be temporarily borne if they help in some measure to free the air of ideas of which I have spoken. Only it is of the utmost importance that they should be temporary, and I therefore most earnestly urge that the operation of this law should be limited to a period of three years only. Further, I think the rigour of some of the provisions can well be softened without rendering the Bill less effective. With these, however, I will deal when I move the amendments of which I have given notice.

*Angry Reprisals — No Remedy*

My Lord, I have said that the situation in several parts of the country is an anxious one. That however does not mean that in my opinion things are really going from bad to worse. On the contrary I entirely share the view which was so clearly and firmly expressed by your Lordship on the opening day of this Council—a view in such striking contrast to the nervous opinions that one hears on so many sides, especially in this city—that the general situation is far easier today than it ever was during your Lordship's time. There is no

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doubt whatever that the Reform Scheme, despite considerable dissatisfaction about details, has largely eased the tension of the situation and has brought over to the side of the administration factors that might otherwise have remained sullenly or helplessly aloof. There is no doubt also that these wicked assassinations and dacoities which have been disfiguring the page of Indian history since last year have at last roused the Indian community to a sense of the great danger in which it stands. Our community is a slow-moving community, but once it begins to move, it moves surely. And any one who can read the signs may see that it has shaken off its lethargy and begun to advance to the support of law and order. My Lord, the crop of violence that has now come to the surface had its ground prepared five years ago. I sincerely believe that no new ground is being added to it, and though we may not have seen the last of these outrages, I think we are nearer the end than many imagine. But the juncture is a most difficult and delicate one, and if ever any juncture called for the utmost tact and conciliation, such as we have now learnt, despite repressive measures to which you have been from time to time driven, to associate with your Lordship's name, that juncture is the present. Angry cries for reprisals, however natural and even justified, will not mend matters and will certainly not assist the task that lies before the Government.

*Indian Press—Potent Instrument of Progress*

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*Indian Press—Potent Instrument of Progress*

My Lord, I am not one of those who think that any appreciable section of the Indian Press has always been seditious or that the press in India has, on the whole, done more mischief than good. On the contrary, our Press has been in the main a potent instrument of progress; it has quickened our national consciousness; it has spread in the country ideas of justice and equality not only between man and man but also between class and class; it has stimulated our public spirit; it has set us higher standards of public duty. And till five years ago, I do not think that, barring a very few exceptions, any section was actually seditious, if by sedition a desire to see British rule overthrown is understood. A considerable proportion was no doubt often ill-informed, prejudiced, even intolerably bitter in its comments on the administration and its measures; but this sprang mainly from ignorance and from a feeling that grievances were not redressed, and not from any actual hostility to the rule itself. During the last five years seditious ideas have no doubt spread more or less in all parts of the country and in some parts more rapidly and extensively than in others. This, however, has been due to special causes which are now well understood and over which it is unnecessary to dwell. I think, my Lord, my countrymen are now growing alive to the fact that nothing is more surely destructive of our hopes of future progress than the spread of these ideas in the land. In my opinion, our first duty is to help in removing these ideas from the air, and because I feel this most strongly, I am prepared to let the Government apply to the situation even the drastic remedies contemplated by this Bill. I do not know if we shall succeed in overcoming the evil altogether. Even



if it lies dormant for a time, there is much in the situation itself which will constantly tend to stir it into fresh activity I have already said that several causes have combined to bring about the present state of things It is of course impossible to go into all of them, but one of them may be mentioned — it is the writings in a section of the Anglo Indian Press

My Lord, I doubt if many Englishmen realise how large a share these writings have had in turning so many of my countrymen against British rule The terms of race arrogance and contempt in which some of these papers constantly speak of the Indians and specially of educated Indians cut into the mind more than the lash can cut into the flesh Many of my countrymen imagine that every Anglo Indian pen that writes in the Press is dipped in Government ink It is an absurd idea, but it does great harm all the same My Lord, I feel bound to say that this Bill by itself cannot achieve much It is even possible that the immediate effect of its passing will be to fill the public mind with a certain amount of resentment And unless the powers conferred by it are used with the utmost care and caution, the evil which they are intended to combat may only be driven underground Force may afford temporary relief, but it never can prove a permanent remedy to such a state of things as we have in this country It is only in the co operation of all classes and the steady pursuit of a policy of wise conciliation on the part of Government that the best hopes of thoughtful men on both sides for the future of this land must lie

*The clause by clause consideration of the Bill was proceeded with at the same meeting when Gokhale moved*

that in clause 3, sub clause (1), of the Bill to provide for the better control of the Press as amended by the Select Committee, for the word "every" in the first line, the word "any" be substituted, for the words "shall, at the time of making the same to deposit," in the sixth line, the words "may be required, at the time of making the same, to deposit" be substituted, and after the word "India" in the thirteenth line, the words and figures "if, in the opinion of the Magistrate, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the press is intended or is likely to be used for any of the purposes described in section 4, sub section (1)," be added

*Demand for Security Should Not Be the Normal Rule*

He said My Lord, I may briefly explain what my amendment is Clause 3, sub-clause (1) provides that when any person wants to keep a printing press after the passing of this Bill, he shall ordinarily be required to deposit security ranging between Rs 500 and Rs 2 000, the Magistrate in exceptional cases being empowered to dispense with the deposit of the security or to vary or cancel any order from time to time that he might make Now the object of my amendment is to reverse this and what I propose comes to this that ordinarily every keeper of a press, after the passing of this Act i.e everyone who wants to keep a new press, shall be free to come and make the declara-

tion without offering security, and that only where the Magistrate thinks that the press is intended or is likely to be used for the publication of prohibited matter, that he should demand security. My Lord, my Hon'ble friend Mr. Sinha,<sup>1</sup> 'whom we are all proud to see on that bench there, and to whose powerful speech we listened with great pleasure, though he gave some of us very little quarter—Mr. Sinha dealt with this amendment of mine by anticipation and therefore I am at a little disadvantage in placing it now before the Council. However, let me explain my position briefly. My Hon'ble friend seemed to suggest that this amendment had been moved by us owing to a misapprehension of the object of Government and owing to our not having studied the Bill properly. Now with all respect, let me assure my Hon'ble friend, that a Bill of 26 sections does not take very long to study. It is true we had only four days, but so far as I am concerned, I had studied the thing carefully before I sent my notice of amendment. I really think that, in spite of all that fell from him this would be a better provision than the provision which the Government proposed in the Bill.

*Security "an Unnecessary Financial Burden"*

My Lord, the Hon'ble Mr. Sinha himself stated that the object of Government was to provide only for the bare requirements of the situation; they did not want to go an inch further than the situation demanded. Now what are the requirements of the situation? The situation required that every new press, which might reasonably be suspected of being likely to be used or intended to be used for the publication of seditious matter, should be kept under strict control first of all by the deposit of a security. It is quite true that it may be a difficult matter for a Magistrate to make an enquiry and make up his mind as to whether he will demand a security or not, but the Magistrate ought to face this difficulty as he does in so many other cases. In any case, it would be a smaller evil than this one where you demand security from every one. Mr. Sinha bracketed me with another member as saying that this would cast a slur on the person from whom the security was required. I believe he had in his recollection some remarks made by me in Select Committee, but so far as my speech of today was concerned I never said a word about a slur being cast on any one—(The Hon'ble Mr. Sinha : I beg the Hon'ble Member's pardon; probably he is right; I was thinking of what he said in Select Committee.) And in my minute of dissent I have confined myself to this ground only, that the deposit of security ranging between Rs. 500 and Rs. 2,000 would be a financial burden, and in many cases it would be an unnecessary financial burden. My Lord, I have especially the cases of our back-

<sup>1</sup> S. P. SINHA, later LORD SINHA OF RAIPUR (1864-1928); the first Indian member of the Governor-General's executive council (1909-10); the first Indian Governor of a Province—Bihar (1921); the first Indian Under-Secretary of State for India (1919); president, Indian National Congress (1915).

ward communities in view. The backward communities of this country are now coming forward, and there is a general demand for education and for educational organs of their own. On the Bombay side recently there have been three or four conferences of backward Mahrattas, and at every one of those conferences a desire was expressed to have an organ of their own. Now I am quite sure some of these bodies will find it difficult to put together more than a thousand or two thousand at the outside and set up a press and have an organ of their own. If the keeper of every new press is to be required to deposit security as a matter of course—of course there is the discretion given to the Magistrate in exceptional cases, but I do not suppose ordinarily it will be exercised—if every keeper of a press is to be required to offer this security, I think it would work as a great hardship on these small concerns.

Again, where the same individual wants to have a small press and issue a small paper, he may be required to deposit two securities of two thousand each. The Hon'ble Mr. Sinha says that ordinarily the Magistrate will require only Rs. 500. Well, I am prepared to take a good many things from Mr. Sinha, but I am not prepared to take that from him as that would depend on the Magistrate and not on the Law Member of this Council. My Lord, I therefore think that my proposal would be better than the provision which the Government have introduced into their Bill.

The Hon'ble Sir Herbert Risley told us that the object of this provision was to meet the case of those old offenders who take new forms and again and again come up in different garbs. Well, if the Magistrate is given this discretion, that would be effective, and a financial burden which would be felt as a hardship by many would be prevented. I therefore suggest that my amendment should be put to the meeting.

[ The Council divided, 9 voting for and 50 against,  
so the motion was negatived ]

*Gokhale moved*

that in clause 3, sub clause (2), for the words "five thousand" in line 14, the words "two thousand" be substituted

*Maximum Security should be Rs. 2,000 instead of Rs. 5,000*

He said: My Lord, this refers to the cases of old printing presses. The cases that I have in view are those of small presses in small taluka towns, not at the headquarters of a district or in any of the big cities. They are very small concerns. Sometimes the whole of one of these concerns may not be worth much more than Rs. 500 or Rs. 1,000 and all sorts of things are printed at it. Take the case of a place where one of these presses was situated and where a wandering dramatic company produced a drama of an objectionable character. It might happen that the press might print a hand bill about the drama without knowing what it was printing, and might get into trouble, especially if it is not on good terms with the local officials who are all small officials. Now

if Rs. 5,000 is demanded from such a man as security, the poor fellow will be crushed out of existence. There is no provision here for an appeal to the High Court, and that is final. I therefore suggest that in place of Rs. 5,000 the sum should be fixed at Rs. 2,000. Even Rs. 2,000 will be a considerable sum, and if the man offends again there are other provisions that would apply in his case.

[The motion was put and negatived.]

### *A Bond rather than Heavy Security*

*Gokhale moved*

that in clause 3, sub-clause ( ), of the Bill, after the word "India" in line 17, the words and figures " or to enter into a bond, if the keeper of the press offers to do so, binding himself not to use his press again for any of the purposes described in section 4, sub-section (2)," be added.

He said : I have taken the substance of this amendment from the Act of 1878. As a matter of fact, in this particular, the present Bill is more drastic than the Act of 1878. The Act of 1878 gave the option to an offending party to enter into a bond, and, if he bound himself not to offend again like that, the Government accepted the bond and things went on without further trouble. I think it would be a desirable thing to have this provision again in the case of small concerns that might otherwise be crushed out of existence by the demand of a heavy security. If a man has offended, especially through inadvertence, he would be all the more ready to bind himself. The man who has offended intentionally will offer security and will go to the High Court when the security is forfeited, whereas the man who has erred through inadvertence will apologise, express contrition and give any undertaking that the Government might ask him to enter into. As the object of the Government is to prevent sedition and not to get money out of these people, I suggest that this amendment should be accepted.

[The motion was put and negatived.]

GOKHALE : My Lord, I beg to support this amendment.\* I know that it will be said that after all it does not mean very much, but if the two things are put together in the Bill it would be a sort of a suggestion to the Local

\*The amendment referred to was the one moved by Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu who proposed that in clause 3, sub-clause (2), after the words " the keeper of such press " the words " to enter into a bond in a sum not exceeding one thousand rupees binding himself not to allow the press to be used for any of the purposes aforesaid or to deposit with the Magistrate within whose jurisdiction the press is situated security for the amount of such bond " be added, and the portion of the same sub-clause beginning with the words " to deposit " and ending with the words " may think fit to require " be omitted. The mover mentioned that his amendment was " on the same lines as that " of Gokhale.

Government that they should offer a choice to the party concerned of the two alternatives

*Definition of "Objectionable Matter" Too Comprehensive*

*Gokhale moved*

that in clause 4, sub clause (1), the words "or may have a tendency" in the ninth line be omitted

He said My Lord, this amendment refers to the definition of what is objectionable matter The definition runs as follows 'Whenever it appears to the Local Government that any printing press in respect of which any security has been deposited as required by section 3 is used for the purpose of printing or publishing any newspaper, book or other document containing any words, signs or visible representations which are likely or may have a tendency, directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise' to do any of the things that are mentioned below, viz 'to incite to murder, etc', 'to seduce any officer, soldier or sailor in the Army or Navy of His Majesty from his allegiance or his duty', 'to bring into hatred or contempt His Majesty or the Government by law established in British India,' and so forth, the Local Government may, etc, etc Now, my Lord this is fearfully comprehensive I will take only one of the things mentioned, the feeling of contempt Now what is provided here is that the writing should not be likely to promote a feeling of contempt towards the Government, 'directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication, or otherwise' Surely this is comprehensive enough and should suffice The Bill however goes further and lays down that the writing in question should not even have a tendency, directly or indirectly, etc to produce such a result I fear this might be made to include almost any adverse criticism For instance, let us take the case of the Excise Department of the Government Suppose in criticising it I say that drunkenness is on the increase owing to liquor shops being located near temples and other convenient places This may be interpreted as having a tendency to suggest that the Government is driving the people to drunkenness and is therefore bringing the Government into contempt in the eyes of people who abstain from liquor Or take another instance Suppose I say that last year, when the Indian Councils Act was under consideration, Lord Morley promised that, as soon as might be after the passing of the Act, Indian Members would be appointed to the Executive Councils of the Governors of Madras and Bombay, and yet nothing has yet been done I may be told that my statement has a tendency to bring the Government into contempt, as it may be taken to attribute a breach of faith to the Secretary of State for India I think the object that the framers of this Bill have in view will be amply met by retaining the other words 'likely, directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise,' and omitting the words

'or may have a tendency.' I therefore propose that the words 'or may have a tendency' be left out.

[ The motion was put and negatived. ]

GOKHALE : Since my amendment which follows is the same in substance, I would like to say a few words upon this amendment.<sup>1</sup> Since Government are prepared to accept the suggestion that the notice of annulment should not be effective for ten days, I do not see why they should not go a little further. Otherwise what is the meaning of the appeal you allow to the High Court? You may, if you like, shorten the period of appeal from two months to, say, fifteen days. If after the notice of annulment the keeper of a press appeals to the High Court, say, within fifteen days to have the order set aside and the High Court expedites the hearing of the case, the whole thing may be decided in a comparatively short time. You propose to compel the man to stop his work even if he has appealed to the High Court that your order may be set aside. This may cause great hardship because he may have entered into contracts to deliver printed matter on a certain day, and unless he offers fresh security, which may be up to ten thousand rupees, you will not allow him to go on. If the appeal is a remedy, I do not see why you should object to extending the period a little further.

*Gokhale moved*

that in clause 8, sub-clause (1), before the word "shall" in line 6, the words 'and who is not the keeper of the printing-press at which the newspaper is printed' be inserted.

He said : My Lord, the object of my amendment is to provide for the case of a well intentioned person who wants to start a small *bona fide* press and also a small newspaper. Under the Bill, this individual, being the keeper of the press and also the publisher of the newspaper, will be required to deposit two securities, one for the press up to a maximum of Rs. 2,000, and the other for the newspaper also upto Rs.2,000. Virtually it means that because this man wants to publish a small newspaper and have a press of his own, he will be called upon to deposit Rs.4,000. I think in such a case the Government may well be satisfied with one security.

SIR HERBERT : RISLEY I am prepared to accept my Hon'ble friend's amend-

<sup>1</sup>The amendment moved by Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu was as follows : that in clause 4, sub-clause (2), after the word and figure "sub-section (1)" the words "and not complied with" be added, and at the end of the same sub-clause the words "after the expiration of ten days from the issue of such notice; provided no such amendment shall take effect if in the meantime an application to set the same aside has been made to the High Court as hereinafter provided until the matter has been disposed of by such High Court" be added.

The amendment was accepted in a modified form which was as follows :

'After the expiry of ten days from the date of the issue of a notice under sub-section (1), the declaration made in respect of such press shall be deemed to be annulled.'

ment in a modified form, namely, 'Provided that if the person registered under the same Act as printer, of the newspaper is also registered as the keeper of the press where the newspaper is printed, the publisher shall not be required to deposit security so long as he is so registered '

The motion that in clause 8, sub clause (2), of the Bill, after the words "Government of India" the following proviso shall be added "Provided that if the person registered under the said Act as printer of the newspaper is also registered as the keeper of the press where the newspaper is printed, the publisher shall not be required to deposit security so long as such registration is in force", and in the existing proviso, for the words "Provided that" the words "Provided further that" shall be substituted, was then put and agreed to

GOKHALE I beg to support this amendment<sup>1</sup> I really do not see why Government should not accept it If the Government think that the man has offended, they can ask him to give an explanation I do not see what there is in this that in any way detracts from the object which the Government have in view It is an unnecessary hardship that a man should get up one morning and find there is an order of forfeiture, coming upon him as a bolt from the blue I therefore support the amendment

*Gokhale Moved*

*that at the end of the Bill a new clause be added, namely*

" 27 This Act shall remain in force for three years only from the date on which it receives the assent of the Governor-General "

He said My Lord, I urge this amendment most strongly on the acceptance of the Government I think that the Government will lose absolutely nothing by accepting it, whereas they will gain a great deal by accepting it There is no doubt whatever that if after the expiry of three years the general situation in the country requires that similar legislation should again be in force, there would not be the smallest difficulty in the way of the Government passing another Bill like this through this Council as it is constituted Look at the fate of the only amendment on which the Council has so far divided today It was not only defeated but positively slaughtered Therefore there would be no difficulty whatever in getting any required legislation through this Council But, my Lord, the advantage of accepting this amendment would be this It would at once show to the public the exceptional character of this legislation It would be at once an invitation to large sections of the public to co operate with the Government in terminating a state of things which has ren

<sup>1</sup>The amendment referred to was the one moved by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey who explained that its object was to ensure that before any action is taken or an order of forfeiture is passed, the accused party may have an opportunity of being heard "

dered that legislation necessary. I think large sections of the people who would otherwise feel it a grievance that this Bill has been passed would not feel the same objection to the Bill if this amendment is accepted. I therefore urge strongly that this legislation should remain in force for three years only.

GOKHALE : *My Lord, I can only say that I am greatly disappointed at the answer of the Hon'ble Sir Herbert Risley. However, I should not have ventured to take up any more time of this Council but for a reference which the Hon'ble Member made to a remark of mine in this morning's speech. I did no doubt say that the air was thick with feelings which were antagonistic to the continuance of British rule. But one way of clearing the air of those feelings, one way of counteracting the mischief that exists, is to show some confidence in the people, and this would be done by limiting the operation of the Bill to three years. I do not wish to add anything more. It is a matter of regret that an appeal from so many quarters has met with no response.*

[ The Council divided, 16 voting for and 42 against; so the motion was negatived. ]



## GOKHALE AND THE PRESS ACT

### *Sir C. Y. Chintamani's Statement*

*The following statement by Sir C Y Chintamani,<sup>1</sup> explaining the circumstances in which Gokhale refrained from opposing the Press Bill may be found of interest Says he*

The following account of the circumstances in which Mr Gokhale refrained from opposition to the Indian Press Bill of 1910 was given to me by Mr Gokhale himself in the Christmas week of 1910 at Allahabad which he visited for the Indian National Congress held there at that time The reason why he gave me the account was that I had strongly opposed the measure in the *Leader* and incidentally criticised Mr Gokhale's attitude as being rather unexpected and disappointing He used to take me into his confidence in matters in general The following account is reproduced from memory but I am nearly certain that it is correct

1 The Bill as originally drafted was very much more drastic than the Bill as introduced in Council The Hon Mr Sinha, the then Law Member of the Government of India, was so opposed to it that when notwithstanding his resistance, the draft Bill was approved by the Governor General in Council he told Lord Minto<sup>2</sup> that he could not remain in the Government and his resignation should be cabled to the Secretary of State<sup>3</sup> Lord Minto next told his Private Secretary Col Dunlop-Smith, that Mr Sinha could not be allowed to resign and that some compromise must be reached in order to enable him to stay He told Col Smith that there were only two men who could save the situation, viz Mr Gokhale and Sir Lawrence Jenkins,<sup>4</sup> and he authorised him to send for them, to place before them all the facts keeping back nothing and to beg them to exert their influence with Mr Sinha to reconsider his resignation Lord Minto felt and urged that if the first Indian admitted into the Governor General's executive council after a long struggle on the part of the Secretary of State threw up the office in less than a year after the appointment and did so on a political issue it would produce a disastrous impression on public opinion in England At this stage or later, Lord Minto apparently communicated with Lord Morley at the India Office and it was stated to Mr Sinha, Mr Gokhale and Sir L Jenkins that Lord Morley's opinion was that if Mr Sinha did not withdraw his resignation it might be fifty years before any Secretary of State could think of appointing another Indian

2 Neither Mr Gokhale nor Sir L Jenkins agreed to advise Mr Sinha to withdraw his resignation unless the Bill was at least modified very substantially The Viceroy having consented to this, Mr Gokhale and Mr Sinha thought of the amendments upon which they should insist as a condition of the latter's withdrawing his resignation One of them was that the measure should apply equally to Anglo-Indian and Indian papers Another was that no security should be demanded from presses and newspapers existing at the date of the passing of the Bill but only if they by their future conduct rendered themselves liable to the

<sup>1</sup>Sir C Y CHINTAMANI (1880-1941) editor, *Leader*, Allahabad (1909-41), member, U P Legislative Council (1916-23 and 1926-36), Education Minister, U P (1921-23), resigned the ministership over differences with the Governor on the interpretation of joint ministerial responsibility member, first Indian Round Table Conference London president, Indian Journalists' Conference (1935), president Indian Liberal Conference (1920 and 1931), author of *Indian Social Reform* (1901) and *Politics since the Mutiny* (1937)

<sup>2</sup>Viceroy and Governor General of India (1905-10)

<sup>3</sup>Rt Hon LORD MORLEY, Secretary of State for India (1905-10)

<sup>4</sup>Rt Hon SIR LAWRENCE HUGH JENKINS (1857-1928) judge, Calcutta High Court (1896), Chief Justice, Bombay High Court (1899), member, Council of India (1909), Chief Justice, Calcutta High Court (1909)

action provided for in the Bill. Thirdly, they pressed that at the final stage an appeal to the High Court should be allowed. This was the minimum without the concession of which Mr. Sinha would not remain and Mr. Gokhale would not advise him to remain in office.

3. The Governor-General in Council met to reconsider the measure and notwithstanding the angry disinclination of other members of the Government, the Viceroy stood for the acceptance of Mr. Sinha's amendments so strongly that the other members yielded and it was decided that the Bill should be introduced in the amended form. Several high officials, including Sir Edward Baker, the then Lt-Governor of Bengal, did not conceal their fury and chagrin in speaking to Mr. Sinha for having emasculated and rendered practically useless the Bill by which they had set so much store.

4. At this stage Mr. Sinha imposed upon Mr. Gokhale a fresh condition without the satisfaction of which he would throw up office in spite of what concessions they had been able to get, as he still disliked the measure intensely and public opinion was so rightly opposed to it. The condition was that Mr. Gokhale should join him in supporting the amended Bill in the Council. To this Mr. Gokhale did not agree. He pointed out that his position as an elected non-official member was different from that of the member of the executive council, that the same obligations did not rest upon him as upon Mr. Sinha, and that after the very special trouble taken by the Viceroy to meet Mr. Sinha's wishes so as to enable him to remain in office it would be highly improper for him to think of resigning. Mr. Sinha next said that he would remain neutral. To this Mr. Gokhale raised a strong constitutional objection that no member of the Government ought ever to adopt such an attitude and that in view of the circumstances it was Mr. Sinha's duty to support the Bill. But Mr. Sinha would not listen and therefore Mr. Gokhale had to make a compromise with him. To avert what he regarded as the gross impropriety of Mr. Sinha's resigning at that stage, Mr. Gokhale agreed to refrain from opposing or voting against the Bill but retaining perfect liberty to move amendments in the Select Committee and the Council. This satisfied Mr. Sinha.

### *The Sequel*

1. As a sequel it may be added that it did not take long for Mr. Gokhale to be disappointed at the manner in which the Press Act was administered in disregard of promises made when the measure was before the Council. His reference<sup>1</sup> to this in the Council in his speech on the proposal to keep alive the Seditious Meetings Act in August or September 1910 may be recalled in this connection besides many private conversations.

2. Lord Sinha related to me the facts so far as they concerned him, when I was in London in 1919, and I recited them, with his permission, in an article in a weekly paper then conducted by Mrs. Besant<sup>2</sup> (I regret I forget the name) to defend Lord Sinha against a most malicious

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the observations made by Gokhale on Friday, August 6, 1910. After pointing out that "more depends upon the manner in which a law is administered than upon the law itself", Gokhale said: Take, for instance, the Press Act of last February. If ever there was a measure which should have been administered with the utmost care and tact and restraint, it was the Press Act passed last session in Calcutta. This was necessary to avoid all needless irritation. It was also due to those non-official members of this Council who, in their desire not to add to the difficulties and anxieties with which the Government were then confronted, tried to go as far as they could in support of the Measure. I grieve to say, however, that in most Provinces these obvious considerations have not been kept in view in working the Act.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. ANNIE BESANT (1847-1933); Theosophist and educationist; vice-president, National Secular Society (1874), president, Theosophical Society (1907-33); founded the Central Hindu College at Banaras (1899); started a Home Rule for India League (1916); interned at Ooty owing to her political activities (1917); president, Indian National Congress (1917); author of a Commonwealth of India Bill (1925).

attack by Mr Eardley Norton in *Looker On* of Calcutta. The article was reprinted by the *Leader*. Lord Sinha's relation of the facts was almost completely identical with Mr Gokhale's.

3 I expect Lord Sinha will have absolutely no objection to the publication of the facts as in fact they were already published six years ago mainly at his own instance. But Sir L. Jenkins is also alive and Mr Sastri should decide whether and how far he would use his name. I should advise if I might that his name might be kept out altogether or except for the bare mention of the fact that he too was taken into confidence and consultation.

Bombay July 2, 1925

C Y CHINTAMANI

## LORD SINHA AND THE PRESS ACT

*The following letter from Lord Sinha to the Secretary, Servants of India Society, Poona, is reproduced as being relevant to the discussions on Gokhale's attitude towards the Press Act :*

GOVERNOR'S CAMP, BIHAR & ORISSA  
12th April 1921

Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated the 7th April, with enclosures, reminding me that your letter dated the 3rd February last, addressed to my Private Secretary, still remained unanswered. For this delay I sincerely apologise and can only plead in excuse that pressure of work in the beginning of my official position put your letter out of my mind for the time being.

I am indeed sorry that the somewhat inadequate report of the few words I addressed to my friends of the National Liberal League at Bombay early in December last should have created or in any way added to any false impression in the public mind regarding Mr. Gokhale's action in connection with the Press Act of 1910. I should have thought that Mr. Gokhale's unblemished record of unequalled services to our country would of itself have been sufficient to prevent such erroneous ideas, and I would have hesitated to say anything in connection with the part I took in the passing of that measure but for the following facts : ( 1 ) that as the late Lord Minto after his return to England publicly referred to my offered resignation and subsequent withdrawal, it is no longer an official secret, ( 2 ) the persistent misrepresentation made in certain quarters in India from time to time that I was the author of the Press Act of 1910, and ( 3 ) your request for a statement to remove such erroneous impression as to Mr. Gokhale's share in that Act as appears from the newspaper articles you have been good enough to send me.

The Press Bill as originally drafted had *no provision* for appeal to the courts under any circumstances and as I could not in the first instance persuade my colleagues in the Executive Council to agree to the insertion of such a provision, I decided to resign my position as Law Member. It was at this stage that Mr. Gokhale intervened and strongly urged me to make one more attempt to persuade the Viceroy and other Members of his Council to reconsider the question of such provision and in so doing used words to the effect I mentioned to my friends in Bombay. Certain other events also happened at this time — to which I do not think it necessary to refer — and it was under the advice of Mr. Gokhale and Sir L. Jenkins, then Chief Justice of Calcutta, that I withdrew my resignation; and the Viceroy and other Members of Council agreed to the introduction of the clauses which provided for an appeal to the High Court.

It is incorrect to say that that clause was introduced in England by the then Secretary of State, as will be apparent from the following passage in Lord Morley's Recollections, Vol. II, page 329 : " Neither I nor my Council would have sanctioned it, if there had been no appeal in some due form to a court of law, and you tell me that you would have had sharp difficulties in your own Council. " The latter part of the sentence obviously refers to the incident I have narrated above. You are at liberty to publish this reply in connection with your letter addressed to me.

Yours faithfully,  
SINHA.

## CRIMINAL TRIBES BILL

*This Bill was designed "to amend the law relating to the registration surveillance and control of Criminal Tribes" in accordance with the recommendations of the Police Commission. The Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council on Friday, 22nd July 1910 and the report of the Select Committee, which included Gokhale, came up for consideration on Wednesday, 1st March 1911. In the course of his speech, Lieutenant Malik Umar Hayat Khan<sup>1</sup> observed*

As the anti-British propaganda is now on foot, there are many societies which have been formed with the common object of committing violence or murder, as unfortunately happened only the other day, or of wandering in military lines or elsewhere in the country to preach sedition. As these have got a common object, they can easily be termed 'gangs', and as the offences are nonbailable, their members can be easily brought under the provisions of sections 2 and 3 of the Bill.

*His somewhat startling suggestion drew from Gokhale the following observations*

My Lord, I had no intention of speaking to this motion, but certain remarks that have been made by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Umar Hayat Khan cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed, and that is why I rise to offer a few observations. I am not quite sure that I have correctly understood the Hon'ble Member, but if I have, I think that he has made statements for which there is really no justification in the clauses of the Bill which we are considering. I think the Hon'ble Member said that this Criminal Tribes Bill would also cover the case of political preachers who create unrest, members of secret societies and so forth. Now, this very question was raised in Select Committee by the Hon'ble Member. He then proposed that the Bill should be made applicable to sanyasis, members of secret societies and such others, and there was a discussion, and he was told that the clauses of the Bill were intended only for members of Criminal Tribes, that sanyassis were not members of such tribes, that even members of secret societies could not be described as members of criminal tribes and that therefore the Bill could not apply to those cases. Having been told so, and the Select Committee having held that view, I am surprised that the Hon'ble Member should stand up in this council and put the interpretation that he has put on this Bill. Of course, no one is bound to take the Hon'ble Member's law seriously, but if this statement is allowed to pass uncorrected it would create a wrong impression in the mind of the public and produce mischief, and I therefore have thought it necessary to make these few observations.

<sup>1</sup> NAWAB SIR (MUHAMMAD) UMAR HAYAT (1874-1944), saw active service in Somaliland (1903), Tibet (1904) and on the staff of the Indian Expeditionary Force in France (1914-15), member Council of India (1929-34).

## THE COUNCIL REGULATIONS

*On Tuesday, 24th January 1911, Mr. Malaviya<sup>1</sup> moved a Resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending the appointment of a Committee to consider and report what changes should be made in the Regulations so as to correct inequalities in the treatment of the various communities and to remove some of the restrictions placed in the choice of candidates for election and also to ensure the provision of a more effective non-official majority in the Provincial Councils. Gokhale, in appealing to the mover not to press his Resolution, spoke as follows :*

### *Special Electorates for Muhammadans and Landlords*

My Lord, I intervene in this debate with some reluctance because the discussion has taken a somewhat unfortunate turn and the subject is of such a character that no matter how carefully or guardedly one may express oneself, one is apt to be misunderstood by somebody or other. At the same time, now that this discussion has been raised, I think it is my duty to those whose views I share that I should state what my position in this matter is. My Lord, I am by birth a Hindu, but for many years it has been the earnest aspiration of my life to work for the advancement of this country only as an Indian; and it was in that spirit, two years ago, when this discussion had taken a somewhat acute form and the Muhammadan community were agitating for special electorates in connection with the new Reforms Scheme, that I supported their claim in this Council and thereby, if I may mention it, incurred to some extent the displeasure of my Hindu brethren throughout the country. The position at that time was this. Under the Indian Councils Act of 1892 there were only general electorates, and the actual working of that Act resulted in a great preponderance of Hindu members in Councils throughout the country. There was no question about this fact; and whatever might have been the explanation of this, this was a sore point with the Muhammadan community, and it was no use saying to them that in the interests of that nationality for which they were all striving they should accept such a position. We had to recognise the actual situation and therefore it was necessary to find a way out of the difficulty. What the Government used to do in those days was that, after the general election had taken place, such inequality as was noticed was redressed by means of Government nomination. Therefore, every time in all the provinces the Government used to appoint a certain number of Muhammadan members of the Council by nomination. Now it was justly objected to

<sup>1</sup> MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA (1861-1946); founder, Banaras Hindu University; member, U.P. Legislative Council (1902); member, Imperial Legislative Council (1910); president, Indian National Congress (1909, 1918 and 1933); one of the founders of the Hindu Mahasabha and presided over its session held at Allahabad (1924) and Poona (1935); attended the Indian Round Table Conference held in London (1931).

this arrangement by the Muhammadan community that it was unfair to them that they should come in only by nomination, and they urged that what they wanted was that instead of coming in by nomination they should come in by election, such election being confined to their community

My Lord, this was on the whole a reasonable position, and I thought it my duty at that time to support the scheme in this Council. I think, at our present stage, special electorates cannot be avoided, and what I have said about the Muhammadans also applies to some extent to the landlord community. In no country throughout the world is it attempted to lay down that elections should be confined to those who represent education. Take England, for a long time property was the basis of all representation. Gradually the basis has been extended and you now have the democracy in its present form, and now we find the educational centres, forming, so to say, special constituencies. All property, in its largest sense, must certainly have a fair share of representation in this country. I do not think, therefore, that any useful purpose is served by objecting to the special representation that has been given either to the Muhammadans or to the landlord classes. Where, however, a legitimate question may be raised, is in regard to the proportion of representation that has been given to these classes, and I think on this point there is no doubt that the bulk of the community have serious reason for complaint. My Lord, the question having been raised, I think it is my duty to state that under the existing arrangements the Muhammadan community is over represented in the Councils. I think many of our Muhammadan friends admit it themselves when the question is put before them in that way. But here it is well to remember that the fault in this matter is not that of the Government of India, I think the original scheme of the Government of India was an eminently fair scheme. Under that scheme Government proposed to give to the Muhammadans such representation partly by mixed electorates and partly by special electorates, that the total should be in accordance with their position in the country.

### *Muhammadans Occupy a Position of Importance*

A great deal has been from time to time said about an expression which the late Viceroy used in his reply to the famous address from a Muhammadan deputation four years ago, namely, that the political importance of the Muhammadan community must be adequately recognized. I think that all along that expression, so far at any rate as it was used by Lord Minto,<sup>1</sup> has been to a great extent misunderstood. I do not think that the late Viceroy intended to convey that the Muhammadans were politically more important than the Hindus, what he wanted to convey was that the Muhammadans occupied a position of importance in the country. They were so numerous, they had such traditions, they represented such past culture, they had a stake

<sup>1</sup>LORD MINTO (1845-1914) was correspondent *Morning Post* (1873), Governor General of Canada (1898-1904) Viceroy of India (1905-1910)

in the country, that it was not desirable to leave them without adequate representation. I do not think that, looked at in that way, any objection need be raised to the statement that the Muhammadan community was a politically important community in the country. They are a minority, but they are the most important minority in the country, and therefore it was necessary that representation should be conceded to them in accordance with their importance.

In recognizing this importance, however, there is no doubt that the Government have gone too far and that over-representation has been granted to the community; but the responsibility for that, as I was pointing out, is with the Secretary of State and not with the Government of India. The original scheme of the Government of India, as I have already said, was eminently fair. The Secretary of State, no doubt from the best of motives, sought to substitute in its place another scheme theoretically perfect but practically, I believe, rather difficult of application in this country; and when that scheme came to be hotly criticized in England, owing to the exigencies of debate in the House of Lords, he not merely threw it overboard, but he also threw over the Government of India's proposals and himself went much further than the Government of India had even intended. This is the whole position, and the question now is what can be done. You cannot take away from the Muhammadan community today what you gave them only yesterday, and I would say to my Hindu brethren, make the best of the situation in the larger interests of the country.

#### *Elected Majorities in Provincial Councils Would Be Safe*

My Lord, so far then as the proportion of representation is concerned, I think that there is real ground for complaint, but the matter is not easy to deal with, at any rate, for some time. As regards the other points in this resolution, I think my Hon'ble friend Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya stands on solid ground. There is no doubt that many of these differences in franchise and qualifications for candidates were perfectly unnecessary, and I am quite sure that when the Government come to revise these regulations they will have no difficulty in removing them if they want to do so. The same thing applies to an elected majority in the Provincial Councils. I think an elected majority in the Provincial Councils would be quite safe. If it is found safe in Bengal, where the relations between the Government and the people have not been quite cordial, there is no reason why it should not do equally well in other provinces. Such an elected majority will consist of composite elements. There will be the Chambers of Commerce men representing the European community, there will be the landholders, there will be the Muhammadan members, and there will be representatives of the general population, and therefore I do not think that there is any danger even from the official point of view in an elected majority in the Provincial Councils. Moreover, if the Government wanted to pass a law for any Province, and the Provincial Council



made any difficulty about it, there is a reserve of power in this Council where there is a standing official majority and where Government will always be able to pass any measure that they please. On these points, therefore, I think that there is a good deal to be said, and when the Government come to reconsider these regulations I hope that something will be done to meet them. My Lord, having said this, I would now make an appeal to my friend the Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. I earnestly hope that he will not press his resolution to a division. My Lord, after all, we have got to take a large view of this matter. What does it really matter how many Hindus and how many Muhammadans sit in this Council? The more important question is how many of us work and in what spirit we work here? The numbers would matter on some future occasion when probably questions will have to be carried here by the weight of numbers, today we certainly do not propose to carry our points by the weight of numbers. As a matter of fact, whether we are many or few, it is only to the moral influence that we exercise on the Government that we have to look at the present stage. Why, my Lord, even if I could defeat the Government today I would not do it. I would not do it for this reason—the prestige of the Government is an important asset at the present stage of the country and I would not lightly disturb it. Therefore the question about the numerical representation of Hindus and Muhammadans may be left over for some time. Other points are upon a footing on which I am quite sure that most Muhammadan members here will be willing to join hands with my Hon'ble friend.

My Lord, before concluding, I must express my cordial concurrence with what has been said by my Hon'ble friend Mr. Madge. It is not my good fortune to be often in agreement with my friend, but I most heartily and cordially support what he has said about leaving these questions alone for some time. If a question like this may be raised here, then cow killing, or the question about Hindu and Muhammadan riots and such others may be raised by somebody else in other places, and then that harmonious co-operation between the two communities which we hope to promote by this Council, and which we hope to see gradually extending all over the country, would most unfortunately be disturbed and the interests which my Hon'ble friend Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya himself has so well at heart, would be seriously jeopardized. With these words I again earnestly appeal to my friend not to press this resolution.

## INDIANIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

*On Friday, 17th March 1911, Mr. Subba Rao<sup>1</sup> moved a Resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending the appointment of a Commission of officials and non-officials to consider the claims of Indians to higher and more extensive employment in the Public Service connected with the civil administration of the country. Gokhale, in supporting the Resolution, spoke as follows :*

Sir, before I say a few words on the resolution which my Hon'ble friend has brought forward, I would like to offer him my congratulations on the industry and care with which he has prepared his case and the ability with which he has presented it to the Council. Sir, this question is undoubtedly one of great importance, and, like all questions of great importance, it is beset with great difficulties. I am anxious to approach it with as much fairness as I am capable of, because there are undoubtedly two sides, and while I am keen that the aspirations of my countrymen should receive fair and reasonable recognition from the Government, I should be very unwilling not to recognize at the same time the difficulties that lie in the path of the Government in dealing with this subject.

### *Government Must Be Continuously Progressive—Four Tests*

Sir, one of the fundamental conditions of the peculiar position of the British Government in this country is that it should be a continuously progressive Government. I think all thinking men, to whatever community they belong, will accept that. Now, I suggest four tests to judge whether the Government is progressive, and further whether it is continuously progressive. The first test that I would apply is what measures it adopts for the moral and material improvement of the mass of the people, and under these measures I do not include those appliances of modern governments, which the British Government has evolved in this country, because they were appliances, necessary for its very existence, though they have benefited the people, such as the construction of Railways, the introduction of Post and Telegraphs, and things of that kind. By measures for the moral and material improvement of the people, I mean what the Government does for education, what the Government does for sanitation, what the Government does for agricultural development, what the Government does for industrial development, and so forth. That is my first test. The second test that I would apply is what steps the Government takes to give us a larger and larger share in the administration of our local affairs—in municipalities and local boards. My third test is what

<sup>1</sup>N. SUBBA RAO, High Court Vakil (1886); member, Madras Legislative Council; member, Imperial Legislative Council (1910-1913); general secretary, Indian National Congress (1913-1917).

voice the Government gives us in its Councils—in these deliberative assemblies, where policies are considered, and lastly, we must consider how far Indians are admitted into the ranks of the public service

Now, sir, as regards the first test, I believe that is what one feels to be in the air—I believe that we are on the eve of important measures being taken by the Government, and in those measures both the officials and non-officials can and should heartily co-operate with one another. As regards the second, I trust that, as a result of the Decentralization Commission's labours, a further advance will soon be made. A fair beginning has already been made, and when we have a further advance in the same direction, we might be expected to remain satisfied with that for some time. As regards deliberative assemblies—the Provincial and Imperial Councils—the reforms that have recently been introduced constitute an important advance, and for some time, therefore, that question may rest there

#### *Four or Five Distinct Landmarks*

When, however, we come to the last question, we strongly feel that the time has come when something must be done to improve matters, and I hope something will soon be done. Sir, I have already observed that the Government has to be a continuously progressive Government, and that it cannot afford to rest on whatever it has done in the past in any one of these directions. Now, taking this question of the employment of Indians in the higher ranks of the public service, which I admit is a very difficult question, I would like to refer briefly to what my Hon'ble friend Mr. Subba Rao has already pointed out, namely, that there are four or five distinct landmarks in regard to this matter in the history of British rule. In 1833, when Parliament laid down that there should be no distinction of race in making appointments to the public service in this country, the British nation gave a noble pledge to the people of this country of its own accord. There was no agitation here at that time—in fact, there was hardly any Western education. It was a great pledge to give, and it was given by the British nation spontaneously. The next landmark is 1854, when the competitive examination was thrown open to Indians along with Europeans. The old Haileybury<sup>1</sup> system was abolished and competition was

<sup>1</sup> "The necessity of specially preparing young men for an Eastern career became evident, and the (East India) Company's Directors in 1806 established the East India College at Haileybury. Here, for the next half-century, all Indian Civil Service probationers took a two years' course of general and Oriental education. The minimum age of 15 was maintained until 1837, though of course it now meant joining in India not younger than 17, but the maximum age of entrance to the College was raised to 22, so that some of the pupils had already put in terms at Oxford or Cambridge before receiving a Director's nomination. From 1837 to 1854 probationers joined the College at 21 and went out at 23. After the latter year open competition for the Indian Civil Service was established and 1855 saw the first batch of "competitionwallahs sent to Haileybury, but before there was any question of the abolition of the Company it was decided to allow no fresh admissions after 1856, and to close the College at the end of 1857". *The India Office* by Sir Malcolm C. C. Seton, K. C. B. p. 132

introduced, and it was thrown open to all. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 constitutes the next landmark. Even then there was no agitation for a wide employment of Indians in the public service for the simple reason that the Universities had not then been established, and there was no large educated class. In 1861, when the Secretary of State appointed his Committee,<sup>1</sup> to which my Hon'ble friend has referred, it was again more the conscience of the English people than any demand made from this side that led to the appointment of that Committee. When the Act of 1870 was passed—that is the next landmark—there was some public opinion here, and a few Indians—notably Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji<sup>2</sup>—had been agitating in England for the admission of Indians to high office; but even then, the main part of the work was done by Englishmen, by English friends of our aspirations, who felt that the arrangements existing at that time were not quite just to the people of India. When, however, the Public Service Commission was appointed in 1886<sup>3</sup>—that is the next landmark—the position was much altered. By that time a large educated class had come into existence, and that class keenly felt its own exclusion from the higher ranks of the Public Service. The Commission was appointed with the declared object of devising means for the larger admission of Indians in these ranks, and as the results of the Commission's labours have, on the whole, been disappointing, there is no doubt that that constitutes a legitimate ground of complaint for the people of this country.

### *Appointment of Commission Urgently Necessary*

Sir, it is interesting to note at what intervals these successive steps in advance were taken. From 1833 to 1854 or 1858, whichever you take, there was an interval of 20 or 25 years. From 1858 to 1870, when the next step was taken, there was an interval of 12 years. In 1886, when the question was again examined, it was after an interval of about 16 years. Since then, however, there has been no inquiry—that means during a period of 25 years—and that is one

<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Subba Rao, the mover of the resolution, this was "a Committee of five members of his (Secretary of State's) Council, all distinguished Anglo-Indians, to consider the subject. They reported on 14th January 1860 that to do justice to the claims of Indians, simultaneous examinations should be held in England and India, 'as being the fairest and the most in accordance with the principles of a general competition for a common object'." "But", Mr. Subba Rao ruefully added, "nothing came out of it".

<sup>2</sup> DADABHAI NAOROJI (1825-1917); one of the founders of the Indian National Congress and thrice its president (1886, 1893 and 1906); founder, East Indian Association (1867); taught Gujarati in the University College, London; Dewan, Baroda State (1874); member, British House of Commons (1892); member, Welby Commission (1897); author of *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* (1901), *England's Duty to India*, *Financial Administration of India*, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The object of appointing the Commission was declared, broadly speaking, to be "to devise a scheme which may reasonably be hoped to possess the necessary elements of finality, and to do full justice to the claims of Natives of India to higher and more extensive employment in the public service." Sir Charles Aitchison, the then Lt.-Governor of the Punjab, was president of the Commission (1886-87).

reason why I urge that the resolution of my Hon'ble friend should be adopted. It is true that during the last three or four years some very striking appointments to high office have been made. My friend, Mr. Ali Imam,<sup>1</sup> sits on that bench there, two Indians sit in the Secretary of State for India's Council, an Indian recently held the position of Advocate-General at Calcutta, and Indians have even been appointed to act as Chief Justices of different High Courts. These striking appointments have no doubt impressed the imagination of the people, and there can be no question that they are deeply appreciated by my countrymen. But our grievance is in regard to the bulk of appointments in the higher ranks, and that grievance is not really touched by these appointments. And so far as that grievance is concerned, the labours of the Public Service Commission resulted in little substantial improvement for us in practice. And indeed in some departments, the position has been rendered actually worse. My Hon'ble friend, Mr. Subba Rao, has pointed out how in regard to the central Civil Service, the recommendations of the Public Service Commission and the orders passed by the Secretary of State on those recommendations have actually put us back, compared with the Statutory Service Rules of 1879. The rules of 1879 gave us one sixth of the total recruitment of Civilians for the country. Now, taking the cadre at about a thousand posts — it may be a few more or a few less — we should have had about 160 Indians, under those rules, in the Central Civil Service. The Commission, however, recommended only 108 posts for us in place of 160, and the Secretary of State cut the number down to 93, and that is the number we have at present. I believe even the whole of these 93 are not yet held by Indians. I think we are about 10 short of what the Secretary of State promised at that time, leaving out of account the additions made subsequently for Burma and Assam. Now, Sir, the Secretary of State's orders were passed in about 1890 or 1891, and twenty years have elapsed since then. If for nothing else, at least for the fact that it is now 25 years since the appointment of the Public Service Commission and 20 years since the Secretary of State passed his orders on the recommendations of that Commission, I urge that there should be a fresh enquiry into the whole matter.

*Division into Imperial and Provincial "Most Unjust"*

But, Sir, I say something more. I say that as a result of the labours of the Public Service Commission, the position of Indians in many branches of the Public Service has actually been rendered worse, and that should now be set right. In the first place, Sir, the Public Service Commission recommended that there should be a division of the Public Service into Imperial and Provincial. Now that was a most unfortunate recommendation. I am quite sure that

<sup>1</sup>SIR ALI IMAM (1869-1932), president, Bihar provincial conference (1908), member, Viceroy's executive council (1910-15), judge, Calcutta High Court (1917), member, Bihar executive council (1918-19), represented India at the League of Nations (1920), Dewan, Hyderabad State (1918-21), attended second Round Table Conference, president, Nationalist Muslim Conference (1931).

the President of the Commission — the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab of that time — a man of broad sympathies, undoubtedly did not want to put the Indians back; but the result actually has been to put us back, and this for two reasons. First, there is a stamp of inferiority on the Provincial men, and they are bound to feel that. Secondly, if you have these artificial divisions of Imperial and Provincial, the abler men in the Provincial Service — I mean those who are abler even than some of the men in the Imperial Service — cannot help feeling that the arrangement is most unjust to them. I am, therefore, strongly of opinion that this division between Imperial and Provincial must go. I hope it will go soon, and unless it does, we shall have to bring up this matter again and again before this Council.

Then, in two departments particularly, this division between Imperial and Provincial has done greater harm to us than in other departments — I mean the Education and the Public Works Department. In some of the other departments, the creation of a Provincial Service has to a certain extent improved the prospects of Indians, so far as mere numbers are concerned, because there were hardly any Indians employed in those departments before and the constitution of the Provincial Service has given them some chance there. But in the Education and Public Works Departments, we have suffered a great set-back. In the Education Department, for instance, Indians were on terms of equality with their English colleagues before the creation of a Provincial Service. The scale of salary was, no doubt, two-thirds, but in other respects they were on equal terms. But they have now been put into a distinctly subordinate position and we see on every side the most flagrant cases, which hurt everybody. Thus we find men of most distinguished attainments in the Provincial Service simply because they are Indians, and men who passed their examinations only yesterday, and who have so far earned no distinction by their work, in the Imperial Service, simply because they are Europeans. I will give only one instance. There is a gentleman here in Calcutta, named Dr. P. C. Ray,<sup>1</sup> a most distinguished man of science, a man who has been honoured by French and German *savants*, a man adored by his pupils, a man who has been doing original work for the last twenty years and more. But he is still in the Provincial Service, whereas young men, fresh from College, without any original work to their credit, men who are admittedly his inferiors, are brought out to this country and put over his head, simply because he happens to be in the Provincial Service and they are brought out as members of the Imperial Service. Now, Sir, this sort of thing hurts not merely the men who are actually affected by it, it hurts the students studying under them. In other departments any injustice done to an Indian official concerns that official only. In the Education Department it affects the students as well; the bitterness passes from the professors to the students, and the whole student community comes to be affected by it.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 35.

*P W D Reorganization — "A Distinct Breach of Faith"*

Take again the Public Works Department. At one time Indian and European Engineers were all on terms of absolute equality not only as regards status but even as regards pay. In 1892, differential rates of pay were introduced for the first time — two thirds pay for Indian Engineers. Now under the new organization scheme, the status of the Provincial Engineers is reduced still further, for they are now to be put on a separate list. Thus, in this Department, we were at first on terms of absolute equality with Englishmen. Then our pay was reduced to two thirds, though in regard to other matters equality was maintained. Finally, it is now decided to do away with this equality by putting us on a separate list altogether. And not only is this applied to new men but a most unjust and unjustifiable attempt has been made to apply it to old men, recruited since 1892. There are about 100 men who are the victims of this gross injustice. There is the definite word of the Government pledged to them in 1892 that they would be on the same list as the Imperial Engineers, and yet it is proposed now to put them on a separate list — a distinct breach of faith. These men have not yet accepted the arrangement, three years have passed, and they have so far got no redress. The Secretary of State is still waiting for the despatch of the Government of India which should have gone long ago. I asked a question the other day on the subject, and the Hon'ble Mr. Carlyle<sup>1</sup> gave an answer, in which I see an element of hope. I, therefore, will not press this question further today, but, if necessary, I will bring a resolution on this subject at Simla. I urge then, first of all, that this distinction between Imperial and Provincial must go.

*Competition Replaced by Government Nomination*

The second respect in which we have lost ground since the last Public Service Commission is in regard to competition. Gradually competition has been abolished more or less throughout the country and we are now made to depend almost exclusively upon Government nomination, pure and simple. Now, I am quite alive to the defects of competition as a method of filling Government offices. Of course it is not ideally the best method, but I contend that it is the best method available. In a country like this, governed by Englishmen, who are unfamiliar with our ways, and cannot instinctively understand the difference between one individual and another, they are at times apt to be misled by appearances, by recommendations and by a lot of other considerations owing to the very peculiarity of their position. And I submit that competition, with all its defects, is any day better than nomination, pure and simple. An Englishman, judging of English candidates, may dispense with competition, because there is a great deal of initial knowledge that may be taken for granted on account of their belonging to the same society. Here the individuals belong to different societies and that initial knowledge is lacking, and nomination,

<sup>1</sup> Member, Viceroy's executive council (1910-15)

I contend, is bound to lead to abuses — haphazard selection and favouritism. My second point, therefore, is that competition must again be restored for making selections for Government service.

*Indian Position in Medical Department "Most Unsatisfactory"*

I will now say a word about one or two other Departments. I have said that in the Public Works and Education Departments, our position has grown worse. In the Medical Department, while it has not grown worse, it is still *most unsatisfactory*. The professorships are all the monopoly of the Indian Medical Service Officers and the hospitals are closed to all non-service men. Recently they have thrown open the Professorship of Anatomy in the Calcutta College to non-service men, but the moment it is thus thrown open to non-service men, it is rendered altogether unattractive. There used to be a pension attached to this post till now, and private practice was hitherto allowed; but it is now declared that there is to be no pension, there is to be no private practice, and the new man will get no house allowance, when every one else is getting it. Thus the moment the post is thrown open to non-service men it is made altogether unattractive for our best men, and I would like to have an explanation as to why this has been done. Take again the question of the Chemical Analysers in Bombay and Karachi. Some years ago, the Secretary of State decided that these appointments should not be the monopoly of the Indian Medical Service. And there is a distinguished man in Bombay available for these appointments today, doing for years the work of Assistant Chemical Examiner. Indian Medical Service men, appointed as Chemical Analysers, receive their training under him, and then they are put over his head. I understand the Government of Bombay is anxious to help this gentleman; but the matter rests with the Government of India, and somehow his ability and record of services receive no recognition from them.

*Exclusion of Indians from Railway Department*

Lastly, I come to the Department of Railways. I am not going into the question in detail today, because my friend the Hon'ble Mr. Mudholkar<sup>1</sup> has already dealt with it exhaustively. *Here we are almost entirely excluded from all higher appointments, and I hold that this is absolutely indefensible.* It cannot seriously be contended that Indians are not fit for any place in the Railway Administration above Rs. 200 a month, when you can put them on the Government bench there, make them Chief Justices of High Courts or entrust them with the management of districts and divisions. To those who speak of such unfitness, I would like to mention an interesting episode. It refers not to the Railway Department, but to another Department — the Survey Department — but the principle is more or less the same. Not many years ago, there was a controversy about the position

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 60



of Indians in the Survey Department, and it was contended very vigorously by the champions of European monopoly that Indians were not fit for the work, and that therefore they should be kept out. Unfortunately a report, submitted by Colonel De Pree, who was then the head of the Survey Department and who was a strong advocate of Indian exclusion, came to be published, and this is what he was found to say in that report

*I may here remark incidentally that my numerous late inspections show me that the tendency of the European surveyors is to stand and look on, while the Natives are made to do the drawing and hand printing, as if they thought themselves quite above that sort of thing. This is a mistake and cannot be permitted for the future. Besides, it is suicidal for the Europeans to admit that Natives can do any one thing better than themselves. They should claim to be superior in everything, and only allow Natives to take a secondary or subordinate part. In my old parties, I never permitted a Native to touch a theodolite or an original computation, on the principle that the triangulation or scientific work was the prerogative of the highly paid European, and this reservation of the scientific work was the only way by which I could keep a distinction, so as to justify the different figures respectively drawn by the two classes — the European in office time and the Native who ran him so close in all the office duties as well as in field duties. Yet I see that Natives commonly do the computation work, and the Europeans some other inferior duties.*

Sir, I beg, with all respect to make a present of this extract to the Hon'ble Sir T. Wynne.<sup>1</sup> One word more, and I have done. Sir, I have admitted that the question is a difficult one, but what I urge is that there should be continuous progress. Nobody urges that the English element should be withdrawn suddenly or even largely, but unless Indians are introduced into the higher ranks in larger and larger numbers, the discontent which the Government are anxious to remove is not likely to disappear. With these words, I strongly support the motion which my Hon'ble friend has brought forward.

<sup>1</sup>SIR T. R. WYNNE, Agent and Chief Engineer, Bengal Nagpur Railway member, Railway Board (1905), member, Imperial Legislative Council president Railway Board (1908)

## DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCILS

*On Tuesday, 27th February 1912, Gokhale brought before the Imperial Legislative Council a resolution recommending the creation of District Advisory Councils. He made the following speech on the occasion :*

### *Broad Survey of Indian Administration*

Sir, I beg to move

that this Council recommends to the Governor-General in Council that steps should now be taken to bring district administration into closer touch with the people by creating, as far as possible, in every district in the different Provinces a District Council, composed of not more than nine members, partly elected and partly nominated, whose functions should be merely advisory to begin with, and whom the Collector should ordinarily be bound to consult in all important matters.

Sir, one of the most important and at the same time one of the most difficult problems connected with the government of this country is how to liberalize the character of our district administration and to bring it into closer association with those who are affected by it. Leaving our local bodies for the time out of account and taking a broad survey, the fabric of our Indian administration may roughly be said to have the district administration for its base, the Provincial Governments and Administrations, in some cases with Executive Councils, in most with Legislative Councils, for the centre, and the Government of India with its Executive and Legislative Councils for the top, the Secretary of State with his Council standing behind all and above all, representing Parliamentary sanction, Parliamentary initiation and Parliamentary control. To put the same thing in another way, Sir, one might say that the immediate responsibilities of day-to-day administration rest on district officers, while the larger responsibilities of the administration, including the work of guidance and control, as also of initiating policies and developing them, belong to the Provincial and Supreme Governments and to the Secretary of State. Now, Sir, before the reforms of the last five years were introduced, the character of this administration was frankly and almost entirely bureaucratic. I use the term in no offensive sense, but simply to mean that it was administration by officials conducted with the aid of official light, and under merely official control. There was no provision in the whole machinery of administration, from top to bottom, for the direct and responsible representation of what might be called the Indian view of things, if one may speak of such a thing as the Indian view, in spite of our numerous differences among ourselves at any set of authority; and there was no responsible association of our people with any portion of the administration. The reforms of the last five years,

however, by admitting Indians to the Secretary of State's Council, and to the Executive Councils of the Governor-General and of Provincial Governments have, in the first place, provided for the direct and responsible representation of the Indian views at the principal seats of authority. Next, Sir, by enlarging the Councils, room has been found on those bodies for the representation, inadequate and unsatisfactory as it is, of different interests in the country, and lastly and above all, by the expansion of the functions of these Councils and in particular by the power of introducing Resolutions, which has been conferred upon members, we have been enabled to raise discussions on matters of public interest face to face with responsible officials, and this has on the one hand given a new sense of responsibility to the critics of the administration, and on the other it has ensured a proper and careful examination of our suggestions and our grievances at the hands of the Government, such as was not possible or was not deemed necessary before. Of course, we are yet a far way from having a real effective voice in the administration, leave alone the question of exercising a direct control over it, but what the recent reforms have achieved is that they have started a system, which tends more and more to substitute an administration conducted in the light of day, and under the eye of public criticism for an administration conducted in the dark and this undoubtedly is a great step in advance. So far, therefore, as the centre and the top are concerned, the administration may now be said to be considerably liberalized, and we must all recognize that the fullest possibilities of these changes will have to be worked up to before the necessary momentum is gathered for a further advance.

#### *A Look at District Administration*

Our district administration, however, continues to be where it was not only five years ago, but, if we leave out of account the small measure of local self-government given by Lord Ripon,<sup>1</sup> it continues to be where it was more than a hundred years ago. It is true that the position of the Collector—and I use the word 'Collector' to represent the head of the district, though in Non Regulation Provinces that term is not used—has been considerably modified as regards his relations with other officials during the last 100 years and more, first by the creation of Commissionerships (that institution is itself three-quarters of a century old), secondly, by the multiplication of central departments, and thirdly, by the gradual evolution of a uniformity of administration which has rendered strong secretariat control both necessary and possible. But while the old position of the Collector in relation to other officials has thus been considerably modified so far as the people are concerned, there has been no improvement in the situation. If anything, the position has grown worse. This fact was freely admitted by witness after

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 32

witness before the Decentralization Commission,<sup>1</sup> and those who appointed the Commission were themselves fully alive to it, because one important object of the enquiry was stated by them to be how the district administration could be brought into closer touch with the people. There is no doubt that the present position of the Collector, so far as the people are concerned, is, in one sense, much weaker than it used to be. In the first place, owing to excessive secretariat control, he is unable any longer to grant redress on the spot. Secondly, owing to the multiplication of numerous central Departments, harassing departmental delays have become inevitable in the disposal of matters which, properly speaking, in the interests of the people, should be disposed of on the spot under the authority of the Collector. Thirdly, owing to the spread of English education in the country and other causes, there is not the same mastery of Indian languages now attempted by Collectors that they used to acquire before. Fourthly, the writing work of the Collector has increased enormously; he is thus tied largely to his desk, and therefore unable to acquire that same acquaintance with the requirements of the people that his predecessors were able to acquire. And, lastly, his back has been stiffened by the growth of political agitation in the country, and he has been, so to say, driven more within himself. All these factors have tended to affect his position for the worse, so far as administering the district in the interests of the people is concerned. The Decentralization Commission, which freely admits the existence of these defects, and which was appointed to suggest a remedy, was, unfortunately, so constituted that its eye was fixed more on official remedies than on non-official remedies. There was only one Indian member on it, and he too was an ex-official. But he was one of our foremost men and he was in favour of the proposal which I have laid before the Council today. All the members, with the exception of two, belonged to the Indian Civil Service, and the two outsiders had no knowledge of the country. The Commission therefore started with what I would call an official bias, and it did not seriously enquire into those remedies which may be called non-official remedies for the state of things which I have already described. The Commission suggested a large measure of delegation of powers from higher authorities to the Collector — an official remedy, pure and simple. However, as the mischief is admitted by everybody, the Council will recognize that it is desirable that the question should be examined from every standpoint, and any non-

<sup>1</sup> This was a royal commission appointed in 1907 with Mr. C. E. H. Hobhouse as Chairman "to consider the problem of administrative and financial decentralisation between the Central and Provincial Governments and local bodies."

The members of the Commission were: Sir Henry William Primrose, Sir Frederic Styles Philpin Lely, Sir Steyning William Edgerley, Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, Mr. William Stevenson Meyer and Mr. William Lionel Hitchens. Sir Henry Primrose subsequently resigned, and Mr. C. E. H. Hobhouse, M. P., then Under Secretary of State for India, and Secretary to the Treasury at the time of the appointment, was appointed Chairman of the Commission.

official remedies that can be suggested fully discussed, and it is because, Sir, I think that the proposal contained in my resolution is such a remedy—a remedy which seeks to associate non officials with the work of administration that I have brought forward the matter before the Council today<sup>1</sup>

*Educated Classes must be Represented in Administration*

Sir, there are those who regret that the old order has passed away, that the old autocracy of the Collector is no longer possible. It is significant, however, that some official witnesses themselves do not share this regret, and recognize frankly that the past cannot be recalled. The past really never returns, and in this matter, even if the past could return, I think it would not be desirable that it should return, for things are not where they were a century or even half a century ago. There is a new element introduced into the situation by the growth of an educated class in the country—an educated class that is entirely the creation of British rule. Now, by the educated class, I do not merely mean, what many of the witnesses before the Commission meant, namely, lawyers and other members of the learned professions. Sir, it is a pity that so many officials adopt an attitude of sneering particularly towards lawyers. Such an attitude, for one thing, is singularly inappropriate from the representatives in this country of a nation, which has at the present moment for its Prime Minister, for its Chancellor of the Exchequer and for its Minister for War, three lawyers in England. Sir, however, some officials may sneer at the lawyer element in India, the non official public will always recognize—and I can make this acknowledgment with the less hesitation because I am no lawyer myself—that we owe a debt of gratitude to the lawyers for the manner in which they have built up the public life of this country. But though our lawyers are still our most independent element in public life, they are not the only persons who come under the category of the educated class. It is not only the lawyers or the school masters or the editors that constitute that class, the educated men of the land owning or mercantile class are also included in the description, men like my Hon'ble friend Sir Gangadhar Chitnavis<sup>1</sup> who sits behind me, or my friend Sir Vithaldas Thackersey<sup>2</sup> who sits on my left. Surely men like these gentlemen, who have come under the influence of Western education in the same way as others, are as much included in the educated class as any others. It may be that the special peculiarities of their position impose special restrictions on the way they express themselves. That is another thing. But we know for a fact that they hold more or less the same

<sup>1</sup> SIR G. M. CHITNAVIS (1863-1929) represented the land-owners of the Central Provinces in the Imperial Legislative Council.

<sup>2</sup> SIR V. D. THACKERSEY, (1873-1921) a big textile millowner in Bombay, president Bombay Municipal Corporation, chairman Millowners' Association, Bombay, president Second Industrial Conference (1906), chairman Bank of Baroda and the Central Co-operative Bank, member, Indian Factory Commission (1907-08), member, Imperial Legislative Council (1910-13).

views as other members of the educated class. It cannot indeed be otherwise. Now, Sir, it is a matter of regret that the attitude of many official witnesses towards the educated class should be what one finds it in the evidence given before the Decentralization Commission. It is true that that was four years ago, when the atmosphere in the country was considerably heated, and one should not recall those things more than can be helped in these days, when the sky is clearer and the atmosphere cooler. However, as this is a matter of some importance I deem it necessary to make one or two observations before I leave it. Sir, there is no doubt whatsoever that the incessant criticism to which some members of the educated class subject the administration of the country, often tries the temper and exhausts the patience of the official class — especially when that criticism is ill-informed as it sometimes is, and takes the form of an indiscriminate denunciation of the official class. But when expressions of impatience and annoyance are used towards the educated class or ebullitions of temper are permitted in official documents intended for publication, all I can say is that such a thing serves no good purpose whatever. Of course these are things to which an exaggerated importance must not be attached, but the plain fact has got to be recognized that mere impatience on the official side cannot now abolish the educated class, just as indiscriminate attacks by non-officials cannot abolish the official class. The fact of the matter is that the two sides have got to get on together in this country for the good of the country; and it is to be hoped, now that the atmosphere has been largely cleared, thanks, among other things, to the King-Emperor's visit, and under the new influences that one feels on all sides that there will be less and less of this impatience on the one side and of indiscriminate denunciation on the other.

Well, Sir, I was saying that the growth of this educated class introduced a new element into the situation which makes a return to the old autocracy of the Collector now absolutely impossible. You have got to give an interest to this class in the administration of the country. It is not enough now that the administration should be carried on efficiently and honestly by the officials; it is further necessary that representative Indians of education and position should be associated with the administration. These men have grown up with ideas about Government different to those with which their forefathers were brought up. If you keep them out of the administration, they will become mere critics of the administration. Now, the limits of fair criticism are soon reached, after which there can be only unfair criticism. If you have a large section of the community in the position of mere critics, fair criticism being soon exhausted and unfair criticism having set in, each succeeding critic tries to go one better than each preceding one and thus the criticism passed tends daily to become more and more unfair. In the interests of the administration itself, therefore, it is necessary to admit the educated class of the country to a share in the responsibility of administration and to give it an interest in that administration.

*Three Requirements of the Situation*

Therefore, Sir, there can be no more a return to the past. If that is accepted, and if the state of things is as I have already described it to be, what is the remedy? That is the next question. Let us recapitulate again the requirements of the situation. Those requirements, to my mind are three. In the first place, we want more government on the spot, and more expeditious government. These departmental delays and this excessive reliance upon the secretariat — from these the District Officer ought to be freed. More expeditious government, more government on the spot, that is the first requirement. The second is, an interest in the administration must now be given to the educated class that has come into existence, an educated class with which the official class must, moreover, learn to get on, and the third is that provision must be made for the grievances of the district being ventilated in a responsible manner in the district itself. This is an aspect of the question to which I attach great importance. If these grievances have to be taken to the Provincial Administration, and have to be brought up for discussion in the Provincial Councils, what happens is this. The grievances from the whole province gather together, and come in one stream, so to say before the Provincial Government, in one stream, when a meeting of the Legislative Council happens to be held, and that conveys an altogether erroneous idea about the whole administration, as though things were wrong here, there, everywhere. What is necessary is that as a grievance arises it should be dealt with as far as possible on the spot. There should be opportunities available to the people to bring it in a responsible manner before the head of the district and have it removed. Then it ceases to be a subject of discussion in so many homes. Then it ceases to breed that poison which gradually comes to fill the air and does infinite mischief both to the Government and the people.

*Constitution of District Advisory Councils*

These, then, are the three requirements of the situation. Now my proposal is that the Government should take steps to create in each district an Advisory Council, constituted on the lines I have indicated. Of course, the suggestions are only tentative, and the actual details will have to be carefully worked out before a change of this magnitude is introduced by the Government. But I should like an Advisory Council in each district, partly elected and partly nominated. Supposing it is a Council of 9, I should have 6 members elected and 3 nominated. Or if it is a Council of 12, I should have 8 elected and 4 nominated. I should leave the power of nomination into the hands of the Collector, who will then be able to appoint men who do not care to stand for election, but whom it is desirable to have on the Council. But a majority of the Council must come in by election because it is the only way known to modern times, by which you can give responsible representation to different interests. A Council then should be created in every district as far as possible,

of which two-thirds, or any other proportion of more than half, should be elected, and the rest, less than half, nominated. This Council, to begin with, should have only advisory functions, though they need not always remain advisory if the experiment proves a success. In this country in our exceptional situation we can progress only tentatively, and from experiment to experiment as each experiment succeeds. If the proposed experiment proves a success, more responsible powers could certainly be entrusted to the Councils in due course. It is necessary that the Advisory Council should be a small body, in order to meet the objection that has been raised by some that it might otherwise degenerate into a talking body. A body of nine or ten members sitting round a table with the Collector, assisted by other district officers, meeting once a month, would be able to dispose of a lot of business on the spot, which at present involves endless delays and indirectly to get rid of a lot of poison which now gathers in a district from day to day, and which tends to vitiate the air in a manner truly regrettable. This is roughly the proposal that I am putting forward.

### *Prussian Analogy Cited*

I may mention that there is an analogy for this in Western countries. On the continent of Europe I find in several countries bodies like the Council that I am proposing, only possessing more responsible powers. I will mention one case — that of Prussia. Of course, I have no personal experience of the matter, and my knowledge is derived entirely from books. But this is what I find to be the state of things in Prussia. I am quoting from Woodrow Wilson's *State* :

The government district in Prussia is not 'an area of self-government, but it is exclusively a division of State administration.

A district in Prussia is nearly the same in area as a district in India. The average district in Prussia is about 3,800 square miles; the average district in India is about 4,100 square miles.

Its functionaries are the principal, — it may even be said the universal, — agents of the central Government in the detailed conduct of administration : they are charged with the local management of all affairs that fall within the sphere of the Ministries of the Interior, of Finance, of Trade and Commerce, of Public Works, of Agriculture, of Ecclesiastical and Educational Affairs, and of War, exclusive, of course, of such matters as are exceptionally entrusted to officers specially commissioned for the purpose. In brief, they serve every ministry except the Ministry of Justice.

These functionaries of the district are called the "Administration" and they work through boards. I need not trouble the Council with details. The President of this body, who corresponds to our Collector, and who is the special representative of the Ministry of the Interior, works alone. All the other departments work through boards. This is how the position of the President is described :



The President of the Administration is the most important official in the Prussian local service. Not only does he preside over the Administration, the general and most important Agency of Local Government, he is also equipped for complete dominance. He may, upon occasion, annul the decisions of the Administration or of any of its Boards with which he does not agree, and, in case delay seems disadvantageous, may himself command necessary measures. He may also, if he will, set aside the rule of collegiate action and arrange for the personal responsibility of the members of the Administration whenever he considers any matter too pressing to await the meeting and conclusion of a Board, or, if when he is himself present where action is needed, he regards such an arrangement as necessary. In brief, he is the real governing head of local administration. The jurisdiction of the Administration covers such matters as the state taxes, the churches, the schools, and the public domain, etc.

Now comes the analogy. There is a district committee associated with this officer. It is described by the author as follows:

Although, as I have said, the Government District is not an area of self-government, a certain part in the oversight of governmental action in the District is given to lay representatives chosen by the Provincial Agents of the people. A District Committee (there is a long German name which I dare not pronounce) composed of two professional members (one of whom must be qualified for judicial office, the other for the higher grades of the administrative service) appointed by the King for life, and of four members chosen by the Provincial Committee for a term of six years, is allowed an oversight of such matters as it has been thought best to put under lay supervision. The President of the Administration is *ex officio* member of the Committee and usually presides over its sessions. All orders or arrangements which he wishes to make with regard to local police are subject to its confirmation, and all questions regarding the control of subordinate local authorities fall to it. More important than its administrative functions are the judicial functions with which it has been recently invested.

But that refers to matters which do not concern the present discussion. Here then we have an analogy which in many respects is useful for our purpose. I find that in some other countries too, there are similar bodies. So the idea may well be taken up and worked out.

#### *Collector's Functions Four Categories*

I may mention that I ventured to submit my proposals on this subject to the Decentralization Commission before which I gave evidence, and if the Council will bear with me, I would like merely to repeat briefly here what I said there, as regards the principal details of the scheme. Roughly I would divide the functions of the Collector into four categories. First must come matters which are urgent and confidential, in regard to which, of course, he

must have the power to do what he thinks proper without consulting the Council. Secondly, there would be matters which he must refer to the Central Government for final disposal, whether there is a Council or not, but in regard to which he would express an opinion or make a recommendation. Here the opinion of the Council should also be ascertained by him and forwarded to Government along with his own opinion. The third division — and here is what would make a great difference to the people — would be of matters, which the Collector should be empowered to dispose of on the spot, if he is able to carry his Advisory Council with him, but which he must otherwise refer, as at present, for orders to the Central Government. This is what will really constitute in some respects the distinctive feature of the scheme, freeing the Collector from the present excessive secretarial control, and associating with him a small body of non-official representatives to prevent his being a mere autocrat and giving the people some voice in the disposal of their affairs. What I would like to see is that the Collector should be the head of an Executive Board, consisting of the Engineer, the Educational Inspector and other officers belonging to the other Departments in the district. And he should have in addition an Advisory Council like the one I have outlined. With the assistance of the Executive Board, he should carry on the general administration of the district and many matters, which he at present has to refer to the Central Government, he should be empowered to decide on the spot with the assistance of his Advisory Council. The last division will be of matters, in which the Collector, though bound to consult his Council, should be free to act as he deems best, taking or rejecting the advice of the Council, as he likes.

In my evidence before the Decentralization Commission, I stated briefly what matters should belong to the different categories. The lists were prepared with much care and thought and with the assistance of men who had spent their lives in the work of administration; so it could not be said that the proposals had emanated from men who did not know anything of the administration of the country. In making these lists, I necessarily had in view the type of administration which prevails on the Bombay side, but substantially they might be made to apply to other provinces as well. Leaving confidential matters alone, and taking the second category, I would include in it (1) Legislative proposals, (2) proposals of revision settlements, (3) revision of water rates, (4) recommendations about remissions of land revenue, (5) creation of new Municipalities, (6) extension of the operation of Acts to new areas, (7) imposition of punitive police, and (8) creation of new posts. All these matters must go to the Central Government in any case, but the Collector should ascertain the opinion of his Council and send that opinion along with his own. In the third category, which concerns the most important part of my scheme, I would have matters, which, as I have already explained, the Collector should dispose of finally if he is able to carry his Council with him, but which he must otherwise refer to the Central Government. If the Council does not agree with the Collector on any question, nothing will be lost, as

the matter will go to the Central Government as at present; but where the Council agrees with the Collector, he should be freed from the control of the Secretariat, and the matter decided then and there. Among such matters would be (1) opening, location and abolition of liquor shops, (2) suspensions of land revenue, (3) levy of building fines, (4) city survey proposals, (5) organization of local supply from forests, (6) opening of new and closing of old schools, (7) establishment of village Panchayats and Unions, (8) suspension of Taluka Boards, Municipalities, Panchayats and Unions, (9) creation of Benches of Magistrates, (10) rules regulating fairs, processions, etc., and (11) assumption of property under the Court of Wards Act. Lastly would come those matters which the Collector may decide as he deems best, even against the opinion of the District Council, such as (1) urgent precautionary measures against plague, cholera, and other epidemics, (2) measures for the preservation of peace, (3) measures of urgent famine relief, and so forth.

I have endeavoured to give the Council an idea as to what I have in my mind in bringing forward today's resolution. If this proposal is taken up by the Government for serious consideration, the details will necessarily have to be carefully worked out by men qualified to deal with the question. But what I have said should suffice to convey to any one a sufficiently clear notion as to what I would like to see established in every district as far as possible. In addition to the matters enumerated by me, the members of these Councils should have the power to discuss grievances relating to the administration of the district at their meetings, which should be held, say, once a month.

#### *Much Favourable Evidence Before Decentralization Commission*

Sir, it is necessary to state that the idea of Advisory Councils formed in a general way the subject-matter of a good deal of evidence before the Decentralization Commission. Unfortunately the Commission did not take up the question seriously. If you look at the cross-examination of witnesses on this subject, you will find that there is hardly any cross examination worth the name. The Commission simply did not care to go fully into the matter. However, that need not deter us from bringing up the question before this Council, whenever a proper opportunity presents itself. The fact has to be noted, however, that the question was before the Decentralization Commission. And on analysing the evidence given by official and non official witnesses, Englishmen and Indians, we get the following results. About 68 English officials gave evidence on this subject. Of them 10 were favourable to the idea of Advisory Councils, nine being in favour of District Councils and one in favour of Divisional Councils only. Among the nine, were two gentlemen, who were members of this Council, the Hon'ble Mr. LeMesurier<sup>1</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Mr (later Sir) HAVILLAND LEMESURIER, I.C.S. served in Assam and Bengal, Commissioner Dacca Division (1906), chief secretary to Government (1909), member, Bihar and Orissa executive council (1914), acting Governor, Bihar and Orissa (1921-22).

Hon'ble Mr. Quin.<sup>1</sup> I am sorry neither of them is now in the Council, else I should have expected to be supported by them. Nine members of the Civil Service in favour of this as against 58 against the proposal—leaving out the late Sir Herbert Risley,<sup>2</sup> who was in favour of Divisional, but not of District Councils—may appear to many to be a small proportion. But, considering that the Civil Service in this country is the standing Conservative party in Indian administration, more firmly rooted in absolute power than the Conservative party in England, I think nine out of sixty-eight is a much more satisfactory proportion than that of the Liberal Peers in the House of Lords who were in favour of Parliamentary reform last year. To my mind, therefore, it is a hopeful thing that on the first occasion of a proposal like this coming up for consideration, nine members of the Civil Service should be found to be favourable to the idea—I am not surprised that the rest were against it. Then four non-official Europeans gave evidence on the subject and it is significant that all four were in favour of the proposal. Further of the 84 non-official Indian witnesses, who gave evidence, 71 were in favour. Some of them wanted the Council to be more than merely advisory—but, in any case, all in favour of constituting Advisory Councils—and only 13 non-official Indians were against it. When we remember how many public men in this country—I will not say—take their cue from officials, but I will say have such humility about them that they distrust their own opinion about any matter, when it comes into conflict with official opinion, it is really surprising that the number of those that went against this proposal was not larger than it was. Finally, fourteen Indian officials gave evidence on this question, and of these seven were in favour of the proposal. This too was not unsatisfactory, taking into account the nervousness of many Indian officials in expressing opinions not likely to find favour with their superiors. Thus the overwhelming weight of evidence on the non-official side was in favour of this proposal; and it had also the support of a small but important minority among the official witnesses.

### *Objections Against the Proposal*

Sir, I will now say a few words about the more important objections that have been urged against this proposal. I have carefully gone through a great deal of this evidence and I may say that the objections resolve themselves under five heads. In one brief sentence, they really come to this. The officials say : We do consult people at present, and will continue to consult them; but we will consult whom we please, when we please, and how we please; we do not want to be bound in these matters! The five objections are, first, that informal consultation is better than formal consultation; secondly, it is difficult to know who are really representatives of the people, and it is difficult to get

<sup>1</sup> Mr. H.O. QUIN, I.C.S., secretary, Bombay Government, also Bombay Government's representative in the Imperial Legislative Council.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 51.

properly qualified representatives for the work, thirdly, the efficiency of the district administration will suffer, fourthly, an advisory body may be desirable but there are already District Boards and Municipalities which might be utilized for the purpose, why multiply these bodies? And, lastly, there is the objection which is a standing argument in this country against all advance, namely, the time has not yet come! Now I will deal briefly with these five objections, and then will bring my remarks to a close. As regards the value of informal consultation, well, it is all very well to say that you do not want to be formally tied down, that you like to be free, and that you will go about among the people and find out things for yourselves. On the one side you complain that you are tied to your desks, you are slaves to reports and returns, that you cannot find time to move among the people, and on the other hand you do not want to be bound to consult anybody, you must be free to consult whom you please! Again, Sir, we have plenty of experience of what this informal consultation means, and in this matter we can speak as no English official can, because they have no experience of our side of the shield. Under the present system of consulting "whom we please", we often find men of straw, men of no character, insinuating themselves into the favour of officials and backbiting innocent people and exercising a pernicious influence. In the end, these things are generally seen through, but that takes time, and meanwhile a good deal of harm is done. And with the frequent transfers of officers that now take place, we are exposed to this risk far too often. But apart from this, without putting it on that low ground, I say that while the officials may continue to consult whom they please—and my proposal does not come in the way of their doing this—all we want is that they should be bound to consult a body of representative Indians, properly constituted. We want a sense of responsibility to attach to the man who is consulted on our behalf, he must not be an irresponsible, self-seeking person, going to the Collector and expressing views which would just suit the particular mood of the Collector at the moment, he should feel the responsibility of his position and should know that he has a responsibility towards the people. To me, Sir, this argument of informal consultation appears to be the weakest argument that has been advanced against the proposal. Some say that it would be better to hold periodical Durbars than to have a standing Advisory Council. Now we all know what these Durbars are. A large number of people assemble—a hundred or so—and you cannot consult them in that definite manner in which you can do at a small Board meeting. The second objection is that it is not possible to know who are the real representatives of the people. Well, Sir, it is too late in the day now to start an argument of that sort. The Government has accepted the principle of election for ascertaining who should represent different interests in various deliberative bodies, in Legislative Councils, in Municipal Boards, and in District and other Boards. That principle, after all, is the only open test available for testing the representative capacity of a given person. I have already said that the results of election should be supple-

mented by keeping a certain reserve of seats in the hands of the Collector, and that by nominating deserving persons to those seats, he may redress any inequalities as regards the representation of different interests. And I agree with the opinion expressed by the Hon'ble the Home Member<sup>1</sup>—I do not know what line he will take today, but I agree with the opinion expressed by him as Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces—that if an Advisory Council comes into existence, it must grow out of the present District Boards and my own opinion is that the District Board should elect the major portion of the members of the Advisory Council.

Sir, the third objection urged against my proposal is that efficiency will suffer. But why should efficiency suffer? I do not propose that the ordinary routine of the Collector's administration should be at all interfered with by the Advisory Council. The Council will meet once a month, and if the efficiency of the Government of India does not suffer by the discussions that take place in this Council—though some officials may think that the time of the Council is wasted by these discussions—or if the efficiency of the Local Governments is not diminished by the discussions that take place in the local Legislative Councils, I do not see why the Collector should want to be more absolute in regard to his charge than the Government of India or the Local Governments. As a matter of fact, I think the efficiency of the District administration will increase and not diminish on account of the association of a body of popular representatives with it.

The fourth argument against my proposal is that there are already District Boards and Municipalities in existence. Why not use them for advisory purposes as well? But, Sir, the Municipalities are concerned with particular towns only. As regards District Boards, my own view is that the districts are really too large as areas for the purpose of local self-government, and I should like to see local rural self-government entrusted almost entirely to Taluka or Sub-divisional Boards and to village panchayats, the District Boards confining themselves to work of a general character only. If this were done and the constitution of the District Boards modified, I should not mind entrusting those Boards with the functions, which I have in view, for Advisory Councils. But that is a different question and I do not want to complicate matters by going into it just now. The District Boards at present look after education, sanitation and roads. If the Government is prepared to widen their scope of work and entrust other functions to them in addition, I have no objection. Lastly, we are told that the time for such a reform has not yet come. That, Sir, is an argument with which we are only too familiar. In the opinion of some officials, the time for *any* reform never comes, and yet somehow it does come and reforms do take place! And, Sir, what has happened in the past about other matters will happen in the case of this also; and in spite of official opposition the time for this reform will come.

<sup>1</sup> SIR REGINALD CRADDOCK, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces (1907-12); Home Member, Government of India (1912-17).

Sir, one word more in conclusion, and I have done. I contend that the association of a Council, such as I propose, with the work of district administration will, instead of impairing the efficiency of that administration, greatly increase it. For it will bring to it that higher efficiency, which results from the responsible participation of the people in the management of their own affairs and which can never be attained by a purely bureaucratic administration, however like a machine it might move. District administration, moreover, is the real ground of contact between the bulk of the people and the British Government and our Legislative Councils, expanded as they are, will not fully serve the end, for which they have been reformed, unless that reform is supplemented by the creation of District Advisory Councils and their association with the officers in charge of districts. Sir, I have already urged at some length that in the interests of the administration itself, the educated classes of this country should be given an interest in the work of that administration. What they feel is, if I may quote what I said before the Decentralization Commission, that the car of administration should not merely roll over their heads, but that they should be permitted to join in pulling at the ropes. This is a perfectly legitimate aspiration, which, I am convinced, the Government must recognize, if not today, at least in the near future. Sir, in a most remarkable article which recently appeared in the *Times of India*, on the Royal visit, that paper said that British rule in this country, owing to its inherent necessities, must be a continuously progressive principle. That, I think, is a profound truth, a truth which should be kept constantly in view by those who are responsible for the administration of this country. It is only by doing this that the Government will be able to adjust itself to the growing complexities of the situation. Thus and thus only, will the Government equip itself for overcoming the difficulties that are bound to gather in its path from time to time. Thus and thus only will the better mind of India be justified in the trust that it has always felt in the higher purpose of British rule, thus and thus only will the people of this land—ancient races to whom the world owes a good deal of its civilization—be able to advance with slow but sure and steady steps to a place in their own country, worthy in accordance with modern ideas of the self-respect of civilized beings.

### *Gokhale's Reply*

*Replying to the debate which ensued Gokhale spoke as follows*

Sir, I must say a few words now by way of reply to the speeches which have been made in the course of this debate. I will begin with my friend, the Hon'ble Sir Gangadhar Chitnavis, who, however, I hope, will forgive me for not dealing at any length with his remarks, because I have only a few minutes at my disposal which I must devote to the Hon'ble the Home Member, and, secondly, with all respect to him, I must say that there was not much in his

speech which needs a reply. Sir, it is somewhat inconvenient that members of this Council should make up their mind to oppose a motion and come to the Council with ready written speeches before hearing what the person who brings forward the motion has got to say. Necessarily, when this course is adopted, much of the opposition loses its force, and as my friend, Sir Gangadhar Rao, did not think it necessary to show me the courtesy to listen to what I had to say before making up his mind, that is an additional reason which absolves me from taking any lengthy notice of his remarks. I will just take note of two things that he said : first, that reforms have only recently been granted, and that we should not ask for more now. My friend really seems more anxious to maintain the conservative and non-progressive character of our administration than the authors of recent reforms themselves, because it is well known that those who initiated the recent measures of reform, also had in mind associating the people with the administration down to the bottom; in what form this was to be done, they left to the Decentralization Commission to recommend. If my friend will only look at the terms of the reference that was made to the Decentralization Commission, he will find that the Secretary of State did ask the Commission to recommend what measures could be adopted, whereby the people of this country should be brought into closer touch with the administration throughout. My friend thinks that perhaps the utmost that might be tried is to have Divisional Councils in a few selected Divisions. Even here he has modified his position as compared with what it was before the Decentralization Commission, because his proposal about Divisional Councils had no such qualifications then, as he has today sought to add. My friend does not see why there should be District Councils. Sir, a district is the unit of administration in this country and not a Division. A Divisional Council will only be a smaller edition of the Provincial Council and will not meet any of the requirements I have mentioned. We want a Council to be associated with the officer, who is primarily responsible for the affairs of a district. My friend expressed a fear of some members proving obstructive. Now in bodies that are purely advisory, no great harm can be done even if anybody is obstructive. The utmost that may happen is that the time of the Board will be to some extent wasted; but we might, I think, well depend upon the common sense of the other members to see to it that that sort of thing does not last for long. There might occasionally be a little obstruction; if you will only assume average reasonableness on the part of the men, elected or selected, this fear of obstruction need not trouble us.

I will now turn to the speech of the Hon'ble the Home Member. Sir, the Hon'ble Member spoke, no doubt, as he has himself told us, with great vigour, but whether he spoke with convincing vigour I must leave to the Council to decide. Personally, Sir, I am not at all convinced by what he said. On the contrary, I must say I am puzzled, I am surprised—indeed, if I may use the word which he himself used—I am astounded at the line he has adopted in



the course of his reply The Hon'ble Member began by promising to smash, to shatter the pretty, pleasant picture which he said I had drawn up for the amusement of the Council The Hon ble Member has certainly smashed many pictures, but they were not of my drawing, they were fancy pictures of his own Sir, I feel bound to say—I think I am entitled to make the complaint—that from one in the Hon'ble Member's responsible position we expect more care to be taken as regards the accuracy of the statements which he attributes to others He attributed to the supporters of this motion all manner of statements which none of us had ever made I, for one, never made any of the statements that he attributed to me, so far as I can recollect He said we spoke in terms of the utmost contempt of District Boards and Municipalities Now I assert that I did not say a single word about these bodies that could be construed into any kind of contempt

SIR REGINALD CRADDOCK I beg the Hon'ble Member's pardon I never said a word about contempt What I said was that the way they omitted any references and put them aside as being unworthy of consideration almost amounted to contempt

GOKHALE Well, Sir, that is because the Hon'ble Member has not really cared to understand our proposal The Municipalities exist for certain specific purposes, the District Boards too exist for certain similar specific purposes We propose to bring into existence another body for certain other purposes It is true that I referred very briefly only to Municipalities and District Boards But that was because we have all to speak within certain time limits here—and, as a matter of fact, I was speaking against time when I came to that part of my speech—and so, though I had intended saying more on the subject, I could not do so for want of time But surely because we did not speak at great length about Municipalities and District Boards, the Hon'ble Member is not justified in calling our attitude an attitude of contempt or one bordering on contempt

#### *Non-Official Association with Collector Pressed*

Then, Sir, the Hon'ble Member spoke of our saying that there were no educated advisors available to the Collector, but who ever said such a thing? We all know that there are Deputy Collectors and others under the Collector They are all men now of good education And none of us said that educated men were not available for consultation What I said at the beginning, what I said in the middle, what I said at the end of my speech was, that what we wanted was non official association with the Collector There are plenty of officials to advise him, and he depends daily upon their reports, that, in fact, is our complaint, namely, that the whole administration is bureaucratic in character, based upon reports received from below and carried on under orders received from above Now we want things to be less like a machine working automatically, and more like an institution which concerns itself with human beings, who have to be interested in the work that is done I

frankly stated in my speech that one of the objects that I had in view in bringing forward this question was to give some sort of interest to the people of the district in the administration of the district, so that, as one result, unfair and irresponsible criticism might become less and less.

Sir, the Hon'ble Member, in referring to a quotation which I had made from Woodrow Wilson, said that I had abruptly stopped quoting, probably because what followed was inconvenient to me. Well, Sir, the Hon'ble Member might have adopted a little more charitable attitude towards me. He saw that I was speaking against time, and he might have assumed that I stopped where I did, because what followed did not concern my argument. However, as the Hon'ble Member has thrown doubt on what I did, I will, for the edification of the Hon'ble Member, read the portion which I did not then read. I will read that portion, and will then, if he likes, pass the book on to him, so that he may verify the quotation. The portion is as follows :

More important than its administrative functions are the judicial functions with which it has been recently invested. Since 1883, the District Committee has been the administrative Court of the District. When acting in this capacity, the Committee is presided over by its judicial member and the President of the administration does not sit with it.

This is all that I had left out, because, as the Council will see, it does not concern the President of the administration, whose position we were considering.

Now, Sir, I will deal with some of the arguments brought forward by the Hon'ble Member in the course of his speech. Here again it is largely a question of the standpoint from which we approach this question. The Hon'ble Member gave us an idea as to how he approaches this question when he said : 'Well, if I were a Collector, I would go out in the District among the people and I would ask those people what they wanted personally. Why should I have anybody between me and the people?' As though the men who will 'come' between him and the people do not belong to the district and have no interest in its administration! This is exactly the attitude of mind, Sir, which must be given up, if district administration is to be improved. You must create in the minds of all classes in the district some sort of interest in, some sense of responsibility for, your administration. It would not do for a man to say, 'I administer this district; it is for me to give orders; the people exist only to obey'! The higher purpose of British rule, as we understand it, is to associate us slowly but steadily with the administration of the country, so that in course of time the administration should really become ours.

#### *Abolition of Divisional Commissionerships*

Sir, the Hon'ble Member referred, towards the close of his speech, to a proposal which I had made before the Decentralization Commission but to which I made no reference today, viz. the abolition of Commissionerships. I did not refer to this — again I must say — because there was no time to do so;

I was speaking against time. My view, however, is the same as it was, when I placed it before the Decentralization Commission, and it is this. You must free the Collector largely from the present excessive secretariat control. After all, he is a member of the same Civil Service from which also the secretariat officials are drawn. In many cases—I have heard this complaint from Collectors again and again—he is a fairly senior officer of that service, whereas some Under Secretary, who is generally a junior man, very often passes orders in the name of the Government on the reports that go from him, frequently after keeping them a good long time in the pigeon holes of the Secretariat. Now what is the value of this kind of thing? Free the man from this, he belongs to the same service, so do Government Secretaries. He is qualified just as well as Secretariat officials to deal with these matters—perhaps better. He is, moreover, on the spot and knows more about the business. Only do not make him an absolute ruler. Free him largely from Secretariat control, but substitute for such control a certain amount of non official association, and for this, associate with him some of the best men in the district, whose advice he should be bound to take, so that, in any case, due deliberation may be ensured and there may be no hasty action. If the Collector cannot spare one day in the month for this purpose, well, I really must say that the ideas that some gentlemen have on the subject of the administration of this country are extraordinary. If you like—it is only a question of funds—give him another assistant so that he may be further freed from his ordinary routine work. But it is a matter of the utmost importance to the people that they should be associated in some manner with the administration of the district, and enabled to feel that it is their own administration. Then the people will criticize the administration less and less, a greater sense of responsibility will come to them, and both parties to this transaction will, in the end, profit by it. If you free the Collector from a large part of the present Secretariat control, I certainly do not think that any harm will be done. If you do this, you will not require the intermediate agency of the Commissioner. Many distinguished men have taken the view that Commissioners are really superfluous. Even the Hon'ble Sir Reginald Craddock refers to that view in his minute. He says he does not want the Commissioners to be mere 'post offices', or 'a fifth wheel to the coach'. Both these expressions we have heard again and again, and they have come from men who have held responsible positions in the administration of the country. If you have a strong central Government laying down policies, issuing general instructions, having Inspectors General to go about and inspect district administration from time to time, and supplying expert advice to the district officers when necessary, then district officers, with the assistance of advisory Councils, might very well carry on the administration of their districts. Sir it is easy for members of the Government to describe the suggestions coming from us non officials as not practicable. It all really depends on whether you are in a position to try them or not. The Hon'ble Member is in a position to try any experiment which he takes it into his head to try, while we

are not in that position. Therefore, I suppose, his ideas are always practicable, whereas ours may be brushed aside as impracticable ! Sir, I certainly hold that Commissionerships are unnecessary and should be abolished. But from that—from the proposal for the abolition of Commissioners to the abolition of Collectorships—well, I do not see that there is any transition whatsoever. The Hon'ble Member says, if Mr. Gokhale proposes the abolition of Commissionerships, he may also propose the abolition of Collectorships; and if that is done, what is to happen ? He might as well ask; if Government ceases to exist, what is to happen ? It would never enter the head of any sane person to propose that Collectorships should be abolished. If you argue in that way then I really must say that that is not a fair way of dealing with a proposal like this.

### *Punitive Police and District Councils*

I regret I have no time to deal with all the specific objections that he has urged against the outlines of my scheme. But I will deal with as many as I can. The first I would take is about the imposition of punitive police. He said that he was astounded that I should suggest that the Collector should discuss this with men sitting with him round a board. By the way, I may state that though I have suggested nine as the maximum number of members of the Council, it need not be necessarily nine and no other. If nine will not do, increase it to any other that is reasonable. That will be my answer to the Hon'ble Mr. Shafi, whose support I am very glad to have in this matter. All I want is that the Council should be a small body, and that it should discuss things as we do at a municipal managing committee or standing committee meeting—in a more or less conversational manner and not by means of speeches. Now, Sir, if you want to impose punitive police on an area or a section of the people, you depend at present upon official reports only. But that is exactly our grievance. For you sometimes throw the whole burden on a wrong class; sometimes it is distributed among classes some of whom have not offended. Now, if you consult your Council on these questions you will first of all have to place your reports before them. If you admit them to a participation in the administration, then the subordinates' reports must be available to them, as papers are laid before Committees that work with a Chairman. If you are prepared to assume that these people will be reasonable beings, that they will not necessarily be afflicted with some extra curse, then they may be depended upon to show a reasonable regard for the requirements of the administration. It is the present secrecy of administration which, unless circumstances are exceptional, must be removed. The British Government in this country must be our Government, not a Government keeping us at arm's length, but really associating us in a responsible manner with the administration, so that we may feel that it is our Government. At present you act on reports from the police. We all know what that means. Everybody's reputation is in the hands of the police. Many of us have suffered from that. I speak in this matter from

personal experience. If you are going to punish a whole class of men—that is what you do by means of punitive police—you can surely explain the reasons to ten or twelve men. If you cannot carry these men with you, rest assured that there is something wrong with your policy.

Then, Sir, the Hon'ble Member objects that my proposal about liquor shops really amounts to asking for local option. Well, Sir, I am a very keen advocate of local option. I have advocated it in the past and will continue to advocate it till it is granted. But my present proposal does not amount to local option, for the Council is only advisory, and if the Collector does not carry it with him, the matter can go as at present to the Government. The function is merely an advisory function, and if he carries the Council with him, a great deal of bother is saved. Again, as regards the suspension of local bodies, the Hon'ble Member is afraid that the members will become unpopular if they vote for suspension. He is strangely anxious that these Councils, which he is doing all he can to prevent from coming into existence, should not become unpopular! Well, even if they are not willing to face unpopularity at once in regard to a Municipality which requires to be suspended, after a time at any rate the fibre of these men will be strengthened and they will discharge their responsibilities as other Indian officials do at present. Then the Hon'ble Member says that the framing of rules may be an urgent matter. If so, you may have an extraordinary meeting of the Council, ordinarily, however, the framing of rules is a matter for deliberation.

If you are not going to associate non officials with you in a matter of this kind I do not know in what else you will associate them with you. The Hon'ble Member fears that the Councils might become a hotbed of intrigue. In what way can a mere advisory body become a hotbed of intrigue? He says two or three men might get an ascendancy over a Collector. But such things happen now, and under my scheme, the evil will tend to grow less and not more. A strong Collector generally takes care of himself, and the chances of two or three unscrupulous men getting an ascendancy over a weak Collector's mind are far greater when you have no Advisory Council than when you have such a Council. Again what about providing for the responsible ventilation of grievances in a district? Is there no value to be attached to this? *I can only express my view that if you provide some outlet for such ventilation, a great deal of bitterness which arises at present will be prevented.* The Hon'ble Member must surely have experience of such matters. Wrong things are sometimes done even without the knowledge of the Collector, by some police officer or some one else. At present the grievance has simply to take its course. As my friend Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya<sup>1</sup> has pointed out questions are asked about it in the Provincial Council, drawing the attention of the whole Province to it. When the complaint does not belong to the Collector's own Department, the matter has to be referred to one or another

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 76

of the numerous central departments with which the country has been flooded in recent years. Well, these departments have their own procrastinating methods of doing work. If there is more government on the spot and if these matters are brought to the notice of the Collector will not much harm be prevented? It is a point of the greatest importance that this kind of harm should be prevented—I do not mean by going to the Collector privately and putting things before him in an individual capacity, for there is no sense of responsibility in that. Sir, the Hon'ble Member asks, what will be the end if you begin like this? I will tell him what the end will be. The end will be better and better administration! The end will be that the people will feel that the administration is theirs. The end will be that the gulf that at present yawns between officials and the public will be steadily bridged : good administration in the interests of the people, the people feeling a responsibility for it and an interest in it, and things moving generally much more smoothly than they do at present—this will be the end if my proposal is accepted!

Sir, I am sorry that I have trespassed on the attention of the Council longer than I should have. I must leave the other points now alone, and I must ask that this resolution be put to the vote.

[ On a division, 14 voted for and 32 against the motion. So the Resolution was rejected. ]

## POLICE ADMINISTRATION

*On Wednesday, 28th February 1912, Mr Bhupendra Nath Basu<sup>1</sup> moved a Resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending the appointment of a Committee of officials and non officials to inquire into the Police Administration in India and the necessity for amending the law relating to confessions in Criminal cases Gokhale in supporting the Resolution, spoke as follows*

### *General Unreliability of Confessions*

Sir, I rise to support the Resolution which my Hon'ble friend Mr Basu has moved for the adoption of the Council, and in doing so I would like to say at the outset that because non official critics of the police administration of this country deem it their duty to make complaints about the character of that administration, whether in this Council or outside, they should not be understood, on that account and by reason of that fact only, to lay the blame of the defects of that administration at the door of the British Government as such I am free to confess, Sir, that the police administration in Native States is as bad as in British territories, if anything, even worse, and I will go further and say that from such records as we have of pre British days, for instance, at Poona, which was at one time the capital of the whole Mahratta Confederacy, things were as bad as in these days The difficulty in discussing this question calmly arises from the fact that when a complaint is made about the defects of the present-day police administration, high English officials deem it their duty, owing to the very peculiarity of their character — and that is really one of the strong points of their race — to stand by the instruments whom they employ and interpret such criticism as directed against themselves, and that imports feeling into a discussion which otherwise might very well be conducted without feeling It is quite true, Sir, as has been pointed out by several Hon'ble Members, that the inquiry by Sir Andrew Fraser's Commission<sup>2</sup> is a comparatively recent inquiry, but since the Commission reported, two questions have come very prominently to the front One is the manner in which confessions are obtained and the general unreliability of such confessions, and the second is the manner in which the work of the new Criminal Investigation Department is done As regards confessions, the Under Secretary of State for India stated some time ago that the Government of India were considering the matter, and that an amendment of the law on the subject would shortly be undertaken And I, for one, expected that this session legislation would be introduced on the subject Very probably the Law

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 41

<sup>2</sup> By its resolution of July 9, 1902, the Government of India appointed a commission "to inquire into the administration of the Police in British India" Mr A H L Fraser as he then was, was its President

Member is going to take part in this debate. I see he has been taking notes. At any rate, I hope he will, and I trust he will tell us when the legislation outlined by the Under Secretary for India will be produced. As we have been assured that the Government themselves are considering this question, I think my Hon'ble friend, who has moved this Resolution, will be satisfied if a statement is made as to the intentions of Government on the subject.

*C. I. D. Sharply Criticised*

The other question, namely, the operations of the Criminal Investigation Department, stands on a different footing. When Sir Andrew Fraser's Commission inquired, the Department was not constituted on its present basis. In reply to a question which I put last year in this Council, the late Home Member laid on the table a statement showing the growth and cost of the Department from year to year since 1905, when the Department was first created. The cost has been going up very largely, but that is a financial matter which I do not want to raise today. What I however want to say is this. The Department, on its present basis, has been in existence for the last seven years and there is so far no sign that its operations would be curtailed. Now, Sir, I am free to admit that during the somewhat anxious times through which the Government had to pass during the last few years, it was perhaps necessary for the Government to devise a machinery whereby they could keep in touch with the various movements that existed or were being started in the country. I am speaking with special reference to the political branch of the Criminal Investigation Department. I am also free to admit that while there was room for anxiety in many directions, and the activity of the Department, such as it was, was at its highest, it was perhaps no time to undertake an inquiry into what was going on. Of course many things have been done by this Department which should not have been done; many reports have been submitted which ought not to have been submitted; many individuals have been shadowed, harassed and falsely accused, who should never have been subjected to such treatment. As long, however, as there was any room for anxiety, the Members of this Council refrained from urging an inquiry into the methods or operations of this Department. But, Sir, everybody now admits — the Government itself admitted this last year in the course of the discussion on the Seditious Meetings Bill — that things are settling down, and very rapidly settling down; and if any pointed proof of it was further required, it has been furnished by the demonstrations of loyalty which greeted Their Imperial Majesties on all sides, when they recently visited this country. And I am quite sure that there is now no serious difference of opinion on the subject between officials and non-officials, that both alike think that things are settling down and that there is not the same necessity for the Government to feel anxious, as they perhaps had during the last few years. Surely, then, now is the time when an inquiry should be made into the operations of a department which is causing the utmost irritation among the people — especially among the



educated classes—in a manner, of which I do not think that the Government have a very clear or adequate idea. Sir, my Hon'ble friend, Sir Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis,<sup>1</sup> the 'ideal citizen' of Central Provinces as we were told yesterday, a man happy in the consciousness of high official appreciation, has just asked us to believe that in the Central Provinces the Criminal Investigation Department is all right. Well, Sir, what will the Council think if I state—and I do this on most excellent authority—that even my Hon'ble friend has not escaped the attentions of this Department, to which he has just given a certificate and has not escaped anxiety on account of its operations? Even he had reason to complain that he was made the subject of an adverse confidential report, which was brought to his notice before it could do him any harm, because he has friends among officials, but which did cause him very considerable anxiety at the time!

*C I D Should Work Less Clumsily*

I will give the Council another instance of how the Department is no respecter of persons. My Hon'ble friend to my left—Sir Vithaldas Thackersey<sup>2</sup>—a man respected alike by officials and non officials, a man who generally keeps to non political activities and confines his utterances to subjects which are specially his own—expressing himself, no doubt, with independence, but evoking the respect of all by his utterances—even he has been honoured by the attentions of this Department. My friend went last month to visit Dacca. He went there, as this is the last session of this Council that will be held in Calcutta, and he thought that as he might not come this side again, he should go and see Dacca. And he went there just for a few hours merely for the purpose of sight seeing, as the guest of the Nawab of Dacca, and from there he went further to Chittagong to acquaint himself with the possibilities of that place as a port, and a centre of trade. Well, a day or two after he left Dacca, a paragraph appeared in one of the Dacca papers—I had a copy of it sent me, and I sent the cutting to Sir Vithaldas—saying that some police constables belonging to the Criminal Investigation Department were sedulously making inquiries about one Sri Vital Das Thakur Das (that was the way how his name was put in the paper) about the object of his visiting Dacca and what he was doing there. Now, Sir, if people like Sir Gangadhar Chitnavis and Sir Vithaldas Thackersey do not escape the attentions of this force, is it any wonder that more humble and less fortunate persons like myself fare worse than this? As a matter of fact I must say I have been receiving such attentions for a very long time, but I have always taken it as in the day's work. My life is frankly given to national work, and I am free to recognize that the Government may think it necessary to keep in touch with all who are engaged in such work. What we are entitled to expect, however, is that the men who are employed in this duty, shall do their work in a less clumsy and offensive

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 91

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p 91

manner than that in which they do it at present. I will give the Council an illustration from my personal knowledge. I belong to a Society of young men — I mean the other members are young men, though I am myself getting on in years — which has been brought into existence to supply a long-felt want, namely, that of young men, trained in the study of public questions, and engaged in public work in various fields as wholetime workers. Now we may be right or we may be wrong in our view of things, in our estimate of the requirements of the situation. We have made up our minds to serve our country according to our lights, and we are prepared to accept the full consequences of our choice. And if the Criminal Investigation Department of the Government wishes to keep in touch with our movements, let it do so by all means; but we are certainly entitled, as peaceful citizens of this country, to expect that we should not be subjected to undue annoyance. Now, Sir, some time ago one of the members of our Society went to the United Provinces to take part in the famine relief operations. He did such excellent work there in that connection that Sir John Hewett<sup>1</sup> thought it necessary to recognize the work in his Famine Report; and yet this gentleman was subjected to such open and continuous annoyance by the men of the Criminal Investigation Department that ultimately he had to complain publicly of it in the papers. He was not only openly accompanied by these men wherever he went, but one of them began to go the length of insisting on sitting on the coach box of hackney carriages engaged by him for going about. Another member of our Society had, for a long time, a cyclist detective assigned to him. The gentleman in question is not even a fast walker — and rather inclined to be corpulent — and an ordinary policeman, walking at an ordinary pace, might well have sufficed for this purpose; but the Department assigned a special cyclist to him. Now, Sir, though I am speaking somewhat lightly of the matter, all this is really most grossly offensive — to put it no stronger than that. I do not say that they should not watch our movements, if they want to do so, though I strongly feel it is most foolish that Government should thus let loose a number of unscrupulous men, such as most of the Criminal Investigation Department men are, on innocent people. But, in any case, it is necessary that all this shadowing should be done in a less offensive and less clumsy manner. Again, Sir, the reports submitted by these men are secret. Nobody knows what is contained in these reports, and everybody's good name is at the mercy of these people. I know of a report which was once submitted against me and for which there was absolutely no foundation. I came to know about it simply through the courtesy of the Political Secretary to the Bombay Government, who happened to entertain a kindly feeling for me. I had made a speech at a mufassal place in the Bombay Presidency. Sometime after, I happened to meet this officer at a party, and he asked me to go and see him the next day in his office. He then asked me what things I had been saying, and he put the

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Governor of U. P. (1907-12).

report into my hands I was amazed to read it I told him that I had never said any of the things attributed to me He laughed and said, of course he knew that I could not have said such things, and he never took the report seriously Now, Sir, this officer discredited the report because he knew me personally But for one man whom these officers know personally, there are ten, a hundred, a thousand men whom they do not know, and against whom reports are daily submitted — reports on which officials very often act It is therefore necessary that an inquiry should now be ordered into the operations of this Criminal Investigation Department The fact is this a number of uneducated and in many cases unscrupulous men have been engaged for the work The work is necessarily regarded as disreputable and is looked down upon in every society A man who goes about surreptitiously and tries to find out behind the backs of people something about them, must necessarily suffer from that disadvantage Therefore you cannot get good men for this work and I recognize that that constitutes a serious difficulty, but some way must be found out of it For great irritation and bitterness is being caused in the minds of thousands of innocent people by the dangerous and unscrupulous activity of the Criminal Investigation Department men Therefore, Sir, an inquiry must now be immediately undertaken into the whole of this business — into how these men are appointed, what their qualifications are, how they perform their duties, what supervision there is on them, and what reliance is placed on their reports

The very fact that things are settling down again makes such an inquiry all the more necessary For these men have to justify their existence, and, therefore, in the absence of anything really worth reporting, they are sure to make up things which do not exist and report them to the Government I, therefore, strongly support the motion of my Hon'ble friend

## MOFUSSIL MUNICIPALITIES BILL

*At a meeting of the Bombay Legislative Council held on Tuesday, 12th February 1901, Sir Charles Ollivant<sup>1</sup> moved the second reading of the Bill for the better management of municipal affairs in mofussil towns and cities. Gokhale then spoke as follows :*

### *Tribute to Sir Charles Ollivant*

The Bill, as originally drafted, contained so many provisions of a distinctly retrograde character and bore on its face such evident impress of a desire on the part of the framers to recede from the position of 1884, that few of us, I confess, had any hopes that it would emerge from the Select Committee in the form which it has now taken. It is true that Sir Evan James,<sup>2</sup> who was then in charge of the Bill, introduced the measure in a speech which, for breadth of view and for a generous appreciation of the work and difficulties of municipal bodies, was a notable utterance, and which, if it had stood alone, would have been a source of sincere satisfaction to the people. Unfortunately, the speech was accompanied by a Bill so much at variance with the sentiments expressed by the mover, that the Honourable Mr. Justice Chandavarkar<sup>3</sup> could not help exclaiming on that occasion how he wished that the Bill had been as good as its author. Those, however, were perhaps peculiar times. At any rate, on going through the proceedings on that occasion, I could not repress a smile of amusement at the boldness of some of the claims advanced. Thus the mover of the Bill, in replying to the debate on the first reading, said that he was not at all dissatisfied with the reception the Bill had met with, in spite of the fact that the measure had evoked a perfect storm of protest both in the Council and outside it. Why, Sir, even my honourable friend, Mr. Desai, whose mental eye appeared at that time to range over free fights among Municipal Councillors, their want of capacity and want of principle, was all the while imagining that he was speaking as an ardent advocate of local self-government. All this, however, is now a matter of history,

<sup>1</sup> SIR CHARLES OLLIVANT, I.C.S., joined service in Bombay (1868); Municipal Commissioner, Bombay (1881-90); Political Agent, Kathiawar (1889); member, Bombay executive council (1897-1902).

<sup>2</sup> SIR EVAN JAMES, I.C.S., entered Bombay Civil Service (1865); Post-Master-General, Bombay (1875), and Bengal (1880); Director-General, Post Offices (1886); Commissioner in Sind (1891-1900); offg. member, Bombay executive council (1898-99); Additional Member, Imperial Legislative Council (1895-98).

<sup>3</sup> SIR NARAYAN GANESH CHANDAVARKAR (1855-1923); editor, *Indu Prakash* (1878-89); attended the first Congress session held in Bombay (1885); member, Congress deputation to England (1885); president, Indian National Congress (1890); judge, Bombay High Court and its Chief Justice (1901 and 1909 respectively); first president, Bombay Legislative Assembly under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1921); vice-chancellor, Bombay University; Dewan, Indore State.

and if I recall the circumstance to your Excellency's mind on this occasion, it is only to show what great reason the people of this Presidency have to feel grateful to the Honourable Sir Charles Ollivant for the conciliatory manner in which he has led the Select Committee in its deliberations on this Bill and for striving to meet the public wishes at least half way. Every one of us who served on the Select Committee was impressed not only with his great knowledge of municipal affairs — that, of course, was well known — but with the enormous industry which he bestowed upon the Bill, drafting, re drafting and drafting again so many of its provisions, and with the anxious solicitude which he throughout evinced to enter into the spirit of non-official criticisms and objections and remove, as far as he could, the causes for reasonable apprehensions. Happily, his view of local self-government coincides largely with that held by many thoughtful persons in this country — both Natives and Europeans, as to the scope and purpose of municipal institutions.

*Two Ways of Looking at Local Self Government Problem*

There are, as many here are no doubt aware, two ways of looking at this question of local self government. One view is that, while the work of deliberation requires the assistance of many minds, all executive work must be entrusted to a single officer with large statutory powers. The other view is that not only the work of deliberation but also executive work ought to be entrusted to Municipal Councillors, who should do the latter by means of small sub-committees, thereby enabling the chosen representatives of the people to acquire direct experience of executive work and of a proper performance of civic responsibilities. The first view is finding increased favour in the United States and has largely influenced the Municipal legislation of our Presidency towns. The second view is strongly held in England and on the continent of Europe, and it has supplied the lines on which municipal legislation in mofussil towns in India is based. Now, my Lord, I am willing to admit that the first scheme is perhaps better suited to the Presidency towns by reason of the largeness of their areas and the diversity of their populations, on the score of race, colour and creed, and the magnitude of the interests involved. But there is no justification for extending such legislation to mofussil towns, which greatly appreciate the lines on which their present municipal constitution is based. It seems to me, my Lord, that in this matter of local self government, Government sometimes manage to do, by almost an irony of fate, just the thing which the people do not care for. Thus in 1888, when the Bombay Municipal Act was revised, Government sought to assimilate the constitution of the Bombay Corporation to that obtaining in the mofussil, when the citizens of Bombay did not require such a change, and it was only after a strong protest on the part of the Bombay Corporation, which was ably voiced by the Honourable Mr Mehta<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Mr (later Sir) PHEROZESHAH M. MEHTA (1845-1915) member, Bombay Municipal Corporation and four times its president (1884-1885, 1905 and 1911), a founder member

the late Mr. Justice Telang,<sup>1</sup> that Government abandoned their proposals. Here, on the other hand, when people in the mofussil are satisfied with their existing constitution, Government proposed to change that constitution into something analogous to that of Bombay. Fortunately, under the direction of the Honourable Sir Charles Ollivant, that attempt has now been abandoned.

*Select Committee's Modifications Inadequate*

Having made these few general observations, I will now, with your Excellency's permission, proceed to say a few words on the Bill before us. I wish to state at the outset that, although the public feel deeply grateful to the honourable member in charge of the Bill for several important modifications which, under his guidance, the Select Committee has introduced, some of these modifications do not go far enough, and if we have proposed no amendments in regard to them, it is because those of us, who represented the other side of the question in the Select Committee, accepted the modifications there in a spirit of compromise on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread. Moreover, there are even in this revised Bill some provisions which it is impossible for us to approve, and, of course, in regard to them we have given notice of the amendments which we intend to move. My Lord, the Bill before us may be considered under five heads: (1) Constitution; (2) Administrative procedure; (3) Duties and obligations; (4) Municipal powers; and (5) Government control.

*Government Going Back in regard to Franchise*

With reference to the first of these divisions, viz. Constitution, I beg leave to observe that, while the revised Bill is a great improvement on the original draft, there are one or two points under this head which are open to serious objection. I refer specially to the proposed provision for conferring the elective franchise on sections of inhabitants. I think, my Lord, when the history of this question of the introduction of the elective franchise into the constitution of Municipalities comes to be considered, it will be admitted that those among us who believe—and believe sincerely—that the right policy in such matters is that of a steady, though cautious advance, have behaved with great moderation in not moving amendments suggesting an extension of the present franchise. When the Act of 1884 was under consideration and when the Government of that day proposed to fix the minimum of elected members at one-half, it was contended by some of the non-official members that the minimum was low in the case of the more advanced municipi-

of the Indian National Congress (1885); one of the founders of the Bombay Presidency Association (1885); member, Bombay Legislative Council (1892); member, Imperial Legislative Council (1893-1902); president, Indian National Congress (1890); vice-chancellor, Bombay University (1910).

<sup>1</sup> KASHINATH TRIMBAK TELANG (1850-1893); judge, Bombay High Court; one of the founders of the Indian National Congress and its secretary (1885-1890).

palities at least and that in their case a more extended franchise was essential Sir James Peile,<sup>1</sup> who was in charge of that Bill, thereupon gave the assurance, and he repeated it again and again in the course of the debate that, though the Bill prescribed a minimum of one half, there was nothing to prevent Government from prescribing a higher proportion for individual Municipalities in consideration of their fitness as determined by the level of intelligence and growth of civic spirit among them Sir James Fergusson,<sup>2</sup> who was then Governor, also stated that it was his hope that, if not during his time, at any rate during the time of his successor, it might be possible for Government to allow a higher proportion of elected to nominated members in the case of the leading Municipalities at least Nothing, however, was done during the last fifteen years by Government to carry out this undertaking except in the case of Poona, where the proportion of two-thirds to one third was granted during Lord Reay's<sup>3</sup> time, but this special privilege has recently been, for all practical purposes, withdrawn Though, therefore, we might have been justified in proposing that the Legislature should now prescribe a higher minimum in the case of the more advanced Municipalities at least, we have refrained from adopting this course with the object of minimising the points of difference between the official and the non official members, and yet Government have thought it right to adhere to this retrograde provision for conferring the elective franchise on sections of inhabitants

My Lord, in 1884, Sir James Peile, as representing the Bombay Government, stated in distinct terms that Government wanted to retain in their own hands the power of nominating members up to a maximum of one half, because it might happen that sections of the community, or certain minorities, might not be able to obtain adequate representation by means of the rate-payers' election, and in that case it would be desirable for Government to have this reserve of power in their hands to supply the deficiency The representation of sections and minorities was thus provided for in 1884 by reserving to Government the right of nominating upto a maximum of one half of members of Municipal Corporations In the present Bill, however, Government retain this power of nominating upto a maximum of one half, and propose in addition that sections and minorities should have seats specially assigned to them

<sup>1</sup> SIR JAMES BRAITHWAITE PEILE, I.C.S. (1833-1906), Director of Public Instruction, Bombay (1869-73), Political Agent in Kathiawar (1873), member Famine Commission (1878-80) member, Bombay executive council (1883-86), vice-chancellor, Bombay University (1884-86), member, Viceroy's executive council (1886-87) member, India Council (1887-1902) member, Welby Commission on Indian expenditure (1897-1900)

<sup>2</sup> SIR JAMES FERGUSSON (1832-1907), served in the Crimean war (1854-55), M.P. (1854-58 and 1885-1906) under secretary for India (1866), under secretary, Home Office (1867), Governor, South Australia (1869-1873) Governor, Bombay (1880-85) under secretary, Foreign Office (1886-91) Post Master General (1891-92)

<sup>3</sup> LORD REAY (1839-1921), Governor, Bombay (1885-90), under secretary for India (1894), chairman, London School Board (1897), chairman, London University College Council (1903-32)

out of the minimum of one-half, thrown open to election. I strongly feel, my Lord, it is most undesirable that Government should go back now upon what they distinctly guaranteed in 1884. My Lord, in this matter of the elective franchise our Presidency is already behind the other provinces of India. I have been looking up the Municipal Administration Reports of other Provinces, and I find that in Madras there are 19 Municipalities which are allowed to elect three-fourths of their members. In the North-West Provinces all the Municipalities to which the elective franchise is extended are allowed to elect three-fourths of the members. In the Central Provinces it is the same. In Bengal and the Punjab most of the Municipalities consist of two-thirds elected and one-third nominated members. Here alone, in the Bombay Presidency, the proportion of elected members is rigidly kept down at half and even that, so far as the general ratepayers are concerned, the Legislature now proposes to reduce. The Bombay Government have often claimed that we in this Presidency are far ahead of other provinces in matters of Municipal administration. Such a boast, however justified on other grounds, is certainly not justified on the ground of the proportion of elected to nominated members on Municipal Boards. I quite admit that it is possible that some sections or minorities might like to be represented by elected instead of by nominated members. In their case, however, all that the Government have got to do is to set aside a certain number of seats which are at Government's own disposal for election by such sections or minorities.

#### *'Notified Areas' Provision*

Another provision coming under the head of Constitution is in connection with the creation of 'Notified areas'. The original proposal to turn villages or groups of villages into 'Notified areas' has now been abandoned in favour of another adopted by the Select Committee, which restricts the provision on this subject to towns, which are the headquarters of talukas, and to hamlets that spring up in the vicinity of railway stations. In assenting to this new proposal, I am not without apprehension that even in this new form it is capable of being worked in a manner which will cause hardship, and I earnestly trust that Government will be very sparing in the use of the powers, which this provision confers upon them and as a result of which people in rural areas will have to bear municipal taxation without corresponding municipal privileges. The analogy of the Punjab has been quoted, but it should not be forgotten that in that province there are at present only 31 'Notified areas' in existence, whereas the Honourable Sir Evan James, in his detailed Statement of Objects and Reasons, has mentioned more than 150 places in this Presidency as fit to be turned into 'Notified areas'.

#### *Position of the Chief Officer*

The third point under Constitution, about which I desire to say a word, is the position of the Chief Officer, whom City Municipalities will in certain



cases have to appoint I admit that under the revised provisions the Chief Officer will no longer be master of City Municipalities, as the original Bill practically proposed, and that the powers now conferred upon him by statute are such as may safely be entrusted to an Executive Officer acting under the full control and supervision of a City Municipality. The provisions about his appointment and removal are, however, in my opinion, not quite satisfactory, and if some of us have accepted them in Select Committee, it was done, as I have already observed, only in a spirit of reasonable compromise.

Coming next to the question of Administrative Procedure, I may state at once that I have nothing but praise to give to this portion of the Bill. I am fully persuaded that the provisions on this subject are a great improvement on the Act of 1884, and I have no doubt that Municipal Corporations will feel grateful to the Legislature for this part of the Bill.

### *Municipal Duties and Obligations*

Coming now to the question of Duties and Obligations, I think it necessary, my Lord, to enter my respectful but emphatic protest against the proposal to impose additional obligations under this Bill on Municipal Corporations. The list of 'Obligatory Duties', as set forth in Section 54 of this Bill, is already so long and covers such a vast variety of functions, that, if the obligations which that clause imposes upon Municipalities were to be literally construed, it would be impossible for the richest Municipality in the world to discharge those obligations satisfactorily, and yet the Legislature now proposes to make additions on very inconclusive grounds to that fearfully long list. It is now proposed, in addition to the obligatory duties already recognized, to call upon Municipalities to bear the cost of combating plague and famine, and to make contributions to the Provincial exchequer for Provincial roads passing through their limits, and for leper asylums and for lunatic asylums which Government may establish outside the Municipal limits. Now in regard to the first of these additions, viz. about plague and famine, I submit to your Excellency that the proposal in the original draft was much worse than the proposal now before us. In the original draft it was proposed to include this duty among the obligatory duties of a Municipality without any qualification whatsoever, but in the Select Committee the honourable member in charge of the Bill advanced so far in the direction of meeting popular objections as to provide that the obligatory duties mentioned in Clause 54 should take precedence of the duties in regard to plague and famine, and that the Municipalities should not provide for the latter until after making reasonable provision for the former. I confess I am not satisfied even with this modification made in the Select Committee, and if I assented to the modified proposal, it was only because I felt convinced that that was the only way to get rid of the original proposal. I believe the Local Government are acting in this matter under instructions from the Government of India, and we had to make our

choice between the proposal as originally drafted and the proposal now contained in this Bill.

With reference to the provisions for levying contributions from Municipalities in connection with Provincial roads and leper and lunatic asylums, I respectfully submit, my Lord, that the proposal is inequitable and ought to be abandoned by Government. In the first place, the contributions by themselves will be very small, and I ask if it is worth the while of Government to cause needless irritation for such small amounts? Secondly, as I have before observed, the list of obligatory duties is already so long that any addition to them, however small, ought, in my opinion, to be deprecated unless Government are prepared to surrender to Municipal bodies corresponding revenues. This was the spirit of the policy enunciated by the Government of India in 1882. But while the list of obligatory duties has grown enormously, I regret to say that there is not a single instance in which Government have transferred to Municipal bodies any of their receipts, and I submit that if new obligations continue to be imposed on the shoulders of Municipalities in this manner, such legislation will come to be regarded by the public not as a scheme of local self-government but as a scheme of local exactions.

Next, with regard to the powers conferred on Municipal bodies, I cordially welcome the proposal to extend these powers in several important directions. I think this extension will make Municipal Administration more efficient and Municipal bodies will be able to deal with various difficulties, which crop up in the work of administration, in a simpler and more effective manner than at present. I am aware that there is some difference of opinion among non-official critics of the present Bill as to the advisability of conferring drastic powers on Municipal bodies to deal with epidemics such as plague. But I beg leave to point out that on this point we had to choose between conferring these powers on Municipalities and leaving these powers under the Epidemic Diseases Act in the hands of Plague Committees appointed by Government and acting with no sense of responsibility to the public; and I believe that, when this question comes to be looked at from that standpoint, the proposal contained in the Bill to confer these powers on Municipal bodies will meet with general approval.

#### *Government Control May Prove Troublesome*

Lastly, coming to the question of Government Control, I confess, my Lord, that my mind is not free from anxiety and apprehension, that these powers of control might prove a source of unnecessary trouble in the hands of unsympathetic officers. I am free to admit that some such powers must be lodged in the hands of Government to make Municipal bodies feel that, if they do not realize their responsibilities properly, there is a speedy and effective method provided to call them to account. At the same time, there is the obvious risk of Government officers sometimes not understanding properly the difficulties of Municipalities or not making allowances in a generous spirit

for small shortcomings, and in such cases it would be open to them to suggest to Government the enforcement of the bludgeon-clauses to the humiliation of Municipal bodies and to the prejudice of the cause of local self-government, and this, my Lord, brings me to the concluding portion of my remarks

My Lord, what little practical experience of Municipal administration I possess has taught me one thing clearly and it is that the District Officers have it in their power to make local self-government a greater success than it is at present, by taking steady and continuous interest in Municipal administration and regarding the work and difficulties of Municipal bodies with greater sympathy than so many of them do at present I regret to say, my Lord, that in some instances District Officers are found to regard the work of Municipalities with indifference till matters assume a serious aspect and then they suddenly come down upon them with the bludgeon-clauses in their hand In other cases these officers interfere so constantly and in such a tone of authority that they appear more like dictators than like sympathetic guides, such as, in my humble opinion, they ought always to strive to be I need hardly say that neither the one attitude nor the other on the part of District Officers is desirable in the interests of local self-government, and I earnestly appeal to them from this place to realize, in a spirit of generosity and even forbearance, the difficulties and shortcomings of our Municipal Corporations, always remembering that, while it is easy to discredit work done by men who are new to their responsibilities, it is not equally easy to stimulate public-spirited citizens to greater exertions when once their ardour is damped by what they might regard as harsh and unsympathetic criticism or judgment Mr. John Stuart Mill has stated in his book on Representative Government that the object of Municipal institutions is not merely to get local work efficiently done, but also to develop civic spirit and raise the level of general intelligence among the people I respectfully submit that, in judging the work of Municipal bodies, both these objects, and not only the first, should be steadily kept in view A higher public life has only just begun in the land, and it behoves those who represent the power that has introduced this life into this country to give whatever guidance might be needed with great tact and in a spirit of sympathy, encouraging those who need encouragement and steadying the footsteps of the weak It is only by such cordial co-operation between District officers and Municipal Corporations that the success of local self-government would be ensured, and it is necessary to ensure this success, because in it are involved the best interests of both the rulers and the ruled

#### *Municipal Bodies and Police Charges*

*At the second reading stage of the Bill on Wednesday, 13th February 1901, Gokhale moved the following amendment*

that in clause 2, after sub clause (2) the following be added “ (3) Of the District Police Act of 1890, sub sections (2) and (3) of Section 77 are hereby repealed ”

He said : These sub-sections provide that municipal bodies should furnish accommodation for the Police force within their limits, whenever they are called upon by Government to do so. My Lord, this question has a history of its own, and with your Excellency's permission I will state the principal facts connected with it in a few words. Before 1882 charges for the Police were borne either wholly or in part by municipal bodies. In 1881, however, the Government of India suggested to the Bombay Government that the charge for the Police should thereafter be borne by Government and that in its stead expenditure on education, medical charity and local public works should be transferred to Municipalities. I will, with your Excellency's permission, read a paragraph from the letter of the Government of India which set forth this proposal :

His Excellency in Council observes that at present the total annual amount spent on Police by Municipalities in British India amounts to about twenty-seven and a half lakhs of rupees. The only function which Municipalities discharge in regard to Police is the provision of funds for the purpose of meeting the whole or a portion of the cost of Municipal Police force. They practically exercise no control over the Police and cannot, therefore, be expected to take any special interest in the efficiency of the force or to look with sympathy on the provisions of the law which treats them as machinery for raising taxes to be spent on a department over which they have no control and in the efficiency and economical expenditure of which they have but little direct interest and no immediate responsibility. The Governor-General in Council would, therefore, be glad to see municipal bodies relieved altogether of the charges for Police, an equal amount of expenditure for education, medical charity and, if possible, public works of local interest, being transferred to them with as full control as may be practically expedient over the details of such expenditure.

In accordance with this suggestion the municipal bodies were relieved of the entire cost of Police charges, and charges under education and sanitation to the extent of two and a half lakhs were transferred to them. The Municipalities have continued to meet these charges from that time. Not only this but the charges have been greatly increased, the Municipal Corporations in the mofussil having now to spend about sixteen lakhs of rupees on education and sanitation in place of two and a half lakhs at which the figure then stood. In spite of this clear understanding, however, when the District Police Act of 1890 came to be revised, Government introduced therein a provision to the effect that Municipalities should be liable for the housing of the Police. Sir Raymond West,<sup>1</sup> who was then in charge of the Bill, observed that such

<sup>1</sup> SIR RAYMOND WEST, I.C.S. (1832-1912); registrar, Bombay High Court (1863); Judicial Commissioner in Sind (1868); judge, Bombay High Court (1873-1887); member, Indian Law Commission (1879); on special duty in Egypt for reforming the judicial administration (1884); vice-chancellor, Bombay University (1886); member, Bombay executive council (1887-92).

accommodation was provided by large towns in England and there was no reason why Indian towns should be exempted from a similar charge. It is unfortunate that the matter did not at that time attract any attention. Municipal Corporations were not consulted and they did not notice this provision, which was somewhat quietly introduced, not into the municipal law of the Presidency, but into the Police Bill. The non official members of the Council also, I am sorry to say, did not notice that the proposed provision was in violation of the undertaking given in 1882. But because the action of Government was not challenged in 1890, that is no reason why we should today endorse it by our silence on the point. I submit, my Lord, that the step taken by Government in 1890 was clearly indefensible and I would venture to say that such a transaction between private persons would be characterized by some strong language. I propose, therefore, that sub-sections (2) and (3) of Section 77 be repealed.

[The amendment was then put to the vote and lost.]

*At the same meeting of the Bombay Legislative Council Gokhale moved*

that in clause 11 (c) (ii), lines 19 and 20, to delete the words "or by sections of the inhabitants."

#### *Opposition to Sectional Representation*

He said. This question of sectional representation has been so fully dealt with by various honourable members in the debate on the second reading that I will not take up the time of the Council by making any lengthy remarks on this subject today. My first objection to the inclusion of these words is that they are an attempt to go back clearly on what was expressly guaranteed to the general ratepayers of the mofussil by Sir James Peile, speaking in the name of the Bombay Government. As was pointed out yesterday, Sir James Peile in 1884 stated in distinct and unequivocal terms that a minimum of one-half of the total number of seats was to be filled by means of election by Municipal ratepayers without distinction of race, class or creed, and that the other half or any smaller proportion, whichever it might be, would be filled by Government by nomination in order to secure adequate representation of special interests, including those of sections or minorities.

My second point is that, if it is thought that these sections or minorities may wish to be represented by elected, instead of by nominated members, there is nothing to prevent Government from setting aside a few of the seats which are at their free disposal for election by such sections. The honourable member in charge of the Bill stated, in winding up the debate on the second reading, that the half retained by Government in their own hands was required for putting experts in certain matters on Municipal Corporations. From such experience of Mofussil Municipalities as I have, I am in a position to say that even in the largest Municipalities there are no more than two or three nominated members who may, in any way, be called experts in any branch, and that

in some Municipalities there are no such persons appointed at all. Therefore, there would always be a large margin of reserve in the hands of Government even after making adequate provision for the appointment of experts.

My next objection to this provision is that it tends to defeat the most important object of local self-government. We value local self-government not only for the fact that local work thereby is better done, but also for the fact that it teaches men of different castes and creeds, who have long been kept more or less apart to work together for a common purpose. There are in all conscience causes for differences enough among the different sections in this land, and I submit, my Lord, that the Legislature should not, in the best interests of the country, without the very strongest reasons, give any statutory recognition to these differences. There is nothing in the nature of local self-government which implies any conflict between the interests of one section and another. If the Council will turn to the list of obligatory duties and optional duties, it will be seen that, except perhaps on the question of slaughter-houses, there is no chance of a conflict of interest arising between the different communities. And on that particular question, if the Hindu Councillors anywhere neglected to construct slaughter-houses for the benefit of Muhammadans and other inhabitants, Government have it in their power, under the provisions of the 'Control Chapter', to require recalcitrant Municipalities to perform that duty.

Then, my Lord, if different sections are to be represented, why talk of the Hindu community as a whole by itself ? There are so many castes and sections of this community, and some of them stand so wide apart from one another, that it will be necessary to recognize their differences, and then where are the Government going to stop ? The honourable member in charge of the Bill just asked : what special merit there was in a road or water-course that it should supply a standard to divide a municipal district into wards, and why the inhabitants of a city would be better divided for municipal purposes into wards than into sections. I think the answer to that is somewhat simple. You divide your presidency for administrative purposes into districts, your districts into talukas, your talukas into towns and villages; for a similar reason a municipal district has got to be divided into wards. If it was possible for all the electors to assemble and vote together and elect all their representatives, I for one would not attach any importance to election by wards. Then there is another reason why it is convenient to divide municipal districts into wards for election purposes. Men residing in the same ward have certain interests in common; those, for instance, connected with roads, lighting and the valuation of properties for the purpose of assessment and conservancy and so forth; and from this standpoint, therefore, election by wards is perfectly intelligible. For these reasons, my Lord, I propose that the words pointed out in my amendment should be omitted from this clause.

Before sitting down, I may mention that I have no objection to Government providing for sectional representation by means of election, provided

they guarantee to the general ratepayers a minimum of half the seats  
[ The amendment was put to the vote and lost ]

*Gokhale then moved*

that in clause 15 (1) (a) (i), line 6, for the word "an", to substitute the words " a non compoundable "

*Non-compoundable Offence may be a Disqualification*

He said This clause as it stands provides that whoever has been guilty of an offence punishable with six months' imprisonment or upwards shall be disqualified from becoming a member of the Municipal Corporation I submit, my Lord, that it is not clear on what grounds the limit of six months is selected It appears to me to be entirely arbitrary I think the more intelligible principle to adopt would be to restrict the disqualification to persons guilty of non-compoundable offences The distinction between compoundable and non-compoundable offences is sufficiently broad at any rate it may be said that the Legislature, by allowing offenders guilty of compoundable offences to compound, takes a comparatively lenient view of their conduct, and to that extent recognizes that the same amount of moral turpitude does not attach to their conduct as attaches to the conduct of those who are guilty of non-compoundable offences I therefore move that the word " non-compoundable " be substituted in place of the word "an".

[ The amendment on being put to the vote was rejected ]

*Gokhale then moved the following amendment :*

In clause 22, sub clause (6), lines 116 to 118, for the words "of years not exceeding seven, and the Judge's decision shall be conclusive," to substitute the words "not exceeding seven years" and to add a new paragraph containing the following words .

"An appeal against such decision shall lie to the High Court "

*Provision for Appeal Against Dist Judge's Decision Urged*

He said The first part of the amendment is only verbal and needs no explanation. The second part, however, involves a matter of principle, and it is necessary for me to offer a few remarks in connection with it This clause, as it stands at present in this Bill, empowers the District Judge to disqualify a candidate who, in his opinion, is guilty of a corrupt practice, from offering himself for election for a period up to seven years, and it provides that the Judge's decision in such cases shall be final Now, I submit, my Lord, that to disqualify a person for such a period as seven years is to cast a great stigma on his character, and I think it is only fair that he should have a right of appeal against such a decision When this clause was under discussion in the Select Committee, some of us first proposed that an appeal on points of law should

be provided for in all election suits. The honourable member in charge of the Bill, however, contended and, I admit, with great force, that feelings in connection with these elections are sometimes so much embittered that in a large number of cases men would be only too willing to take advantage of every possible provision to give trouble to their opponents and an enormous amount of litigation would, as a consequence, ensue. We thereupon dropped our first proposal and urged that at least one appeal should be provided for in the case of those who were declared disqualified for any particular period under the last sub-clause of this clause. The honourable member in charge of the Bill then observed that he had an open mind, but it was desirable to look up the English law and other precedents on the subject. I would point out that under this clause a corrupt practice is committed by a candidate, not only when it is committed by himself, but also when it is committed by any persons acting under his general authority. This means that sometimes the responsibility of a candidate for a corrupt practice may be merely technical, and in such a case it would be a great hardship to disqualify him for any particular period without giving him the right of appeal. I therefore move the amendment standing in my name.

[Consideration of the amendment was postponed, at the instance of Sir Charles Ollivant, to enable him to ascertain whether "we have the statutory power to provide for an appeal to the High Court", "whether such a provision would be in order." ]

On the following day (Thursday, 14th February 1901), Sir Charles Ollivant explained : The matter has been considered by the Law Officers of the Government, and we find there are practical difficulties in the way of permitting an appeal to the High Court. He then proposed that "in line 111 the word "person" be substituted for "candidate" and the following words be added to the sub-clause : " Provided, however, that such person may, by an order which the Governor in Council is hereby empowered to make, if he shall think fit, in that behalf, be at any time relieved from such disqualification." My reason for putting "person" instead of "candidate" is this. It has been mentioned that the candidate himself, though constructively guilty, may really be not morally guilty, inasmuch as the agent authorized by him may be the person really guilty. If an agent is guilty of corrupt practices, then surely that agent should not be allowed to stand for election as a Municipal Councillor, and therefore I consider it desirable to put "person" instead of "candidate".

[The clause as thus amended stood part of the Bill.]

*Gokhale then moved the following amendment :*

In clause 27, sub-clause (1), lines 11 to 13, for the words "such Chamber shall, if the Governor in Council so directs, be entitled to elect one Councillor", to substitute the words "the Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of such Chamber, appoint one Councillor."



*Chambers of Commerce should be debarred from Election to Managing Committees*

He said The amendment is one merely of form and I trust that the honourable member in charge of the Bill will see his way to accepting it I beg to point out, my Lord, that nowhere in this country is an outside body like the Chamber of Commerce allowed to elect members to the Managing Committee direct The Chambers of Commerce no doubt send representatives to the Corporations themselves, but the function to elect members of the Managing Committee is either confined to the Corporations or it is divided between the Councillors and Government Thus in Bombay, where there are twelve members of the Standing Committee, the Corporation elects eight and Government nominates four, in Calcutta the ratepayers' representatives elect four the representatives of special interests and Government nominees elect four and Government itself appoints the remaining four In Madras there is no complex provision whatsoever It will thus be seen that not even in presidency towns is an outside body allowed to appoint a member directly to the Managing Committee I do not wish to deprive the Chamber of Commerce at Karachi of the right to nominate one member to the Managing Committee, which this clause, as it stands, seeks to confer upon it, but I submit that the form in which this right is conferred should be the one that I have suggested in my amendment, viz that Government may appoint one member on the recommendation of the Chamber of Commerce instead of the Chamber itself appointing that member

Speaking on the amendment, Sir Charles Ollivant said So far as I can see, there is no great difference of opinion about it, but it seems to me that there is this distinction between the two courses In the Bill as it stands at present, the procedure would be for the Governor in Council to direct the Chamber of Commerce to elect one of the Councillors to the Managing Committee, and that direction would hold good permanently unless it is cancelled by the Governor in Council, whereas if the Honourable Mr Gokhale's amendment is accepted, the procedure will be, on each occasion that there is a new Managing Committee or the Chamber's representative ceases to be a member for the Chamber, to apply again to the Governor in Council to be allowed to elect a member to fill the vacancy

GOKHALE I wish to point out that if my amendment is accepted, the Corporation will elect the total number of members to the Managing Committee minus one, so that I do not see how this would have a different result from what the original wording of the section would have I quite see that under the original wording the power is conferred on the Chamber direct and once for all, but on the other hand you are introducing for the first time the principle of allowing an outside body to make an appointment to the Managing Committee I think it will be more convenient if Government nominate on the recommendation of the Chamber, the slight inconven

ience will be less objectionable than the introduction of a novel principle.

[ The amendment was then put to the vote and lost. ]

*Resuming consideration of the measure on the following day, Thursday, 14th February 1901, the Council had before it an amendment moved by Mr. Bomanji Dinshaw Petit. He proposed the substitution of the word "reasonable" in line 3, clause 54 by the words : "so far as its funds admit."*

GOKHALE : I oppose this amendment. The words that are already in the Bill, namely, that reasonable provision has to be made, are sufficiently intelligible. If in place of these words, those now proposed were substituted, that would lead to Government exercising their powers of control on every possible occasion whenever they thought that provision was not made by any Municipality to raise sufficient funds for properly performing its obligatory duties. So I, for one, favour the wording of the Bill as it stands.

[ The amendment was put to the vote and lost. ]

*Mr. Giles then moved that in clause 54, sub-clause (p), line 60, the words "middle class and" be deleted. The amendment was designed to delete from the list of obligatory duties of municipalities the duty of providing for middle class education.*

GOKHALE : My Lord, I may mention that in the Select Committee I had moved an amendment similar to that which the Honourable Mr. Giles has moved now; but it was pointed out that the words objected to were in the old Act and that no sufficiently strong reasons were advanced for taking them out of the clause. It was also urged, I think by the Honourable Mr. Parekh, that if you allow these words " middle class and " to remain, it will be open to Municipalities to spend money on middle class schools or middle schools even if they ignored some of the other objects under Section 54, and Government could not come down upon them and ask them to close these schools and spend money on those other objects. But if you take out the words, other objects would take precedence of middle class education, and in that respect the hands of the Municipality would be tied. In deference to the wishes of the majority therefore I withdrew my amendment; but I confess I am in cordial sympathy with the amendment of the Honourable Mr. Giles, as I welcome every attempt at a curtailment of the enormous list of obligatory duties.

[ The amendment was accepted by Government. ]

*Mr. B. D. Petit moved that lines 72 to 83 inclusive be deleted from clause 54 whose effect would be to absolve municipalities from plague and famine duties, etc. The duties imposed upon Municipalities by these sub-sections, he pointed out, "are such that not even the larger Municipalities will be able to carry them out with anything approaching success."*

GOKHALE : I confess I strongly sympathize with the amendment proposed by the Honourable Mr. Petit. It is true that some of us have agreed to the inclusion of the paragraphs, which the honourable member proposes to omit, in the Select Committee, but we had to do it by way of choosing the lesser of two evils. My Lord, this, I understand, is an instance

of what is called legislation by mandate, and I believe if the honourable member in charge of the Bill had had his way, these two paragraphs would not have found a place in this Bill at all. We therefore had to choose between accepting the utmost that he could offer to meet our objections and the provisions contained in the original draft, which were certainly much worse than what we have now in the revised Bill. What was proposed in the original draft was to include famine and plague charges in the obligatory expenditure of municipal bodies, placing famine and plague on a level with other obligations set forth in Section 54. The modification made by the Select Committee in that proposal is that the obligatory duties set forth in Section 54 will take precedence of plague and famine, and that it is only after making reasonable provision for those duties that municipal bodies will be liable to spend money on famine relief or plague. Now, my Lord, the list of obligatory duties is so long that one may say in somewhat cynical manner that if a Municipality has funds to spend on plague and famine, when it has got to make reasonable provision for so many obligatory duties, it will have only to thank itself for being called upon to bear this new burden. But while we have thus agreed to the modified form in which the proposal now stands, I confess I should be much better pleased if these paragraphs were omitted altogether. Specially in the case of famine, my Lord, when Government have imposed special taxation for the purpose of famine relief, it does appear to me unfair that Government should now try to transfer a portion of their own burden to the shoulders of municipal bodies.

[ The amendment was put and lost ]

*The next amendment of which Gokhale had given notice was that the whole of clause 55 be deleted.*

In moving it, he said: This clause provides that municipal bodies should be liable to pay contributions for the greater wear and tear to which Provincial roads passing through their limits are subjected by the inhabitants residing within those limits. The amount of the contribution is to be determined by Government, and it will represent the excess of the cost of repairing the roads within municipal limits over the cost of repairing Provincial roads outside municipal limits.

Now my first point in this connection is that in no other Province in India are such contributions levied and I don't see why in Bombay alone municipal bodies should be treated worse than elsewhere in this respect. My second point is that the taxation of Mofussil Municipalities per head in the Bombay Presidency is higher than similar taxation in other provinces. Taking the year 1895-96 as a normal year for all provinces, I find that in Bengal this taxation was 14 annas 1 pie per head, in Madras it was 14 annas 3 pies, in the North-West Provinces Rs 1 9 0, in the Central Provinces Rs 1 6 9, in the Punjab Rs 1-8 6, and in Bombay it was Rs 1-11-7. Our taxation is thus considerably higher than elsewhere, and if our Municipalities deserve any special treat-

ment, it should be in the direction of relieving them of some of the existing burdens and not of imposing new ones. Then, my Lord, residents within municipal limits pay taxes to the Provincial exchequer also, and therefore if they use Provincial roads it is in virtue of their position as taxpayers of the province. Then, again, Government propose to exempt their own vehicles from the Municipal Wheel Tax and other taxes, and I fail to understand how Government who do not want to pay anything for the use of municipal roads can, in fairness, claim a contribution from municipal bodies for the use of Provincial roads by the residents within municipal areas. I think, my Lord, that this is a wholly one-sided arrangement and that it lacks that fairness and that reciprocity to which municipal bodies are clearly entitled. I must also protest, my Lord, against these repeated attempts to add to the already long list of the obligatory duties of Municipalities. In 1882, a definite promise was given by the Bombay Government in a Resolution signed by your Excellency's honourable colleague on the left, that if additional duties were thrown on Municipalities, additional sources of revenue, such as a portion of the assessed taxes, would also be transferred to them. This undertaking has never been carried out, while frequent attempts have been made to add to the list of our obligatory and optional duties. It may be said that after all these contributions would not be large, but in that case I ask, my Lord, is it worth the while of Government to cause needless irritation for such trifling sums of money? Moreover, though the contributions themselves may be small, there is a principle involved in them which I think is radically wrong. I therefore propose that the whole of this clause should be omitted.

SIR CHARLES OLLIVANT : I am permitted by His Excellency to say that Government will concede this point and strike out this clause.

[ Clause 55 was accordingly deleted. ]

*Gokhale then moved to delete the whole clause 56.*

He said : This clause empowers Government to call upon municipal bodies to contribute towards the cost of maintaining leper and lunatic asylums outside their limits. I propose that this clause should be deleted on much the same grounds on which I moved my last amendment. Leprosy and lunacy are not local diseases and I do not think any municipal body can in fairness be held responsible for providing special accommodation for such as happen to be unhappily afflicted with these diseases. Government may well spend money out of the Provincial exchequer, to which the people contribute, for the special benefit of the lepers and lunatics of the whole province. I think, my Lord, that as in matters of education Government require Municipalities to make provision for primary education and leave it to their discretion to provide or not, as they deem best, for secondary and other kinds of education, so in this matter of medical charity, Municipalities should be required to provide dispensaries where patients may be treated for ordinary diseases, and that it should be left to their option to contribute or not as their means

permit for such special objects as leper and lunatic asylums outside their limits I therefore move the amendment which stands in my name

SIR CHARLES OLLIVANT In the United Kingdom lunatic asylums are paid for out of the local rates, and surely it must be to the advantage of the local body if it is able to contribute to a central institution instead of having to provide one for itself

GOKHALE It is quite true that in the United Kingdom local bodies contribute to lunatic asylums, but in the United Kingdom, Government does a great many things for the people which are not done in India For instance, the Government of the United Kingdom spent last year thirteen millions sterling on primary education, which means more than 10 per cent of its total revenue If the Government of India will spend a corresponding proportion of their revenue on the primary education of our people, I would be quite willing that local bodies should be called upon to contribute to leper and lunatic asylums

[ The amendment was rejected ]

GOKHALE . The Select Committee, if I remember right, was of the same opinion as the Honourable Mr Chhatre I do not know whether this is a clerical error, or that the word "may" has been used in the sense of "shall".

Mr S A Chhatre then moved an amendment whose object was "to provide a safeguard against neglect or want of proper supervision of the educational branch of the municipal business by making it incumbent on a Municipality, small or large, to appoint a small committee called a 'School Committee' for looking after the management of all educational institutions which it may be either obligatory or discretionary with it to maintain "

[ The amendment was rejected ]

GOKHALE I quite admit that the amendment<sup>1</sup> which has just now been suggested by the Honourable the Advocate General removes to a certain extent the objection I feel to this proviso, but it does not remove the whole objection It is a new provision and I move that the whole of the proviso (a) of clause 60 be omitted The proviso is intended to exempt Government buildings and Government vehicles from municipal taxation Under the existing law they are liable to be so taxed, and, as a matter of fact, the Karachi Municipality is deriving an income of about Rs 10,000 a year from this source In the City of Bombay, also, Government buildings pay 80 per cent of the municipal taxes, and there is no reason why in the Mofussil alone Government should seek to escape this very legitimate payment I propose, therefore, that the whole of proviso (a) be omitted

<sup>1</sup> The object of the amendment, in the words of the Advocate General, was to ensure that "if the State should acquire railways, they should not be excluded from municipal taxation, railways being used almost exclusively for profit "

*Government Dictation in Taxation Matters Opposed*

*Gokhale then moved*

that in clause 74 (2), lines 25 and 26, to delete the words "when any tax is suspended under sub-section (1) or".

He said : In the original draft of this Bill it was proposed that whenever it appeared to Government that the level of taxation in a Municipality was not sufficiently high, Government might of their own motion direct the imposition of additional taxation so as to bring up the level to the desired height. A proposal so drastic in its nature naturally led to much animated discussion in the Select Committee, and the honourable member in charge of the Bill ultimately agreed to modify it so far as to limit its operation to cases of default only. When the Select Committee re-assembled in Poona, we found, however, that in addition to the provision for cases of default, to which the non-official members had assented, there were also these words, to which I take exception, introduced into the clause. Now, my Lord, what would be the effect of these words if they are allowed to stand as part of the clause ? A Municipality may propose an addition of 20 per cent. in its water-rate and may send up the proposal to Government for sanction. Government might, if the words which I want to be omitted are allowed to stand, say in reply : "No, we don't sanction an increase of 20 per cent. in the water-rate, but instead of that we direct you to make an increase of 50 per cent. in the house-tax." Under these circumstances a Municipality will naturally be most reluctant to send up any proposal for additional taxation to Government and for all practical purposes Government will be able to dictate what taxes should be imposed and municipal bodies will be reduced to the position of mere instruments for enforcing and collecting the taxes. I submit, my Lord, that the position which Government have taken in this matter is a very illogical one. I can quite understand Government interfering where a Municipality persistently commits a default, but where it is a mere matter of difference of opinion, where a Municipality thinks that one tax should be imposed and Government thinks that another tax would be more suitable, the proper course for Government is to send the whole correspondence back to the Municipality with the intimation that the proposed tax cannot be sanctioned, but that the Municipality was at liberty to make other proposals. For these reasons I beg to move that the words which I have already read out should be deleted.

[ The amendment was accepted by Government. ]

*Gokhale then moved the following amendment :*

In clause 113, sub-clause (1), lines 7 and 8, for the words "at a height of not less than 12 feet from the surface of the street," to substitute the words "at such height from the surface of the street as the Municipality may fix by by-laws from time to time."

He said The next amendment of which I have given notice is in reference to the provision that no verandah, balcony or other projection shall project from any building at a height of less than twelve feet I quite agree that in large cities like Poona, Karachi and Ahmedabad the provision is very desirable, but in small Municipalities a statutory limit of 12 feet will sometimes be a source of needless hardship I therefore propose that the question of height should be left to be dealt with by by-laws in the case of each Municipality Of course these by laws will require the sanction of Government, and so Government will still have the power of preventing too low a limit from being prescribed anywhere

[ The amendment was agreed to ]

*Gokhale then moved*

that in clause 181 (1), line 5, the word " twenty five " be substituted for the word " fifteen "

He said The proposal as it stands in the Bill is that the minimum limit of population for a Municipality to be constituted a City Municipality should be 15,000 I submit that this limit is too low and that it should be raised at least to 25,000 It should be borne in mind that when a Municipality is made a City Municipality, Government can, in cases of mismanagement, call upon that Municipality to employ a Chief Officer, also if necessary a Health Officer and an Engineer Now these men will require to be highly paid if they are to be worth anything, and I submit my Lord, that these appointments may be, in all probability will be, beyond the capacity of small towns with a population of 15,000 or so I have already quoted to this Council a few figures indicating the level of taxation per head in this Presidency and elsewhere Our taxation, which is the highest of all provinces, is a little under Rs 1 12 0 per head, which gives, comparatively speaking, a very small revenue to a town of 15,000 I believe there is no special merit in the figure 15, and I shall be satisfied if the limit is raised to 25,000

MR MOSES I would suggest by way of a compromise that the limit be fixed at 20 000

GOKHALE I am prepared to accept the suggestion if it has a better chance of being considered favourably by Government than my own proposal

[ The amendment was rejected ]

GOKHALE The amendment that I desire to move in connection with this clause is that the Chief Officer should be empowered to make appointments without the sanction of the Municipality to posts with a salary of Rs 15 and under, and not Rs 20 If the limit of Rs 20 is retained I fear that, except in the case of Karachi all appointments lower than those of officers will be practically in the exclusive gift of the Chief Officer This, I submit is not desirable for several reasons, and a limit of Rs 15 would, I think, be fairer

and would, moreover, be sufficient for all practical purposes. I therefore move the amendment which stands in my name. . .

[ The amendment was accepted by Government. ]

*When the consideration of the Bill was resumed on Saturday, 16th February 1901, Gokhale said :*

With reference to the second amendment<sup>1</sup> I beg to point out, that we understood the other day that provision would be made for confining famine relief only to destitute persons ordinarily resident within the limits of Municipalities. The wording of the amendment is wider than that. It provides for relief of destitute persons within the limits of the municipal district. Poor persons may crowd into a city and the responsibility for relieving them may, if the words stand as they are, be thrown on the Municipality. It is only a matter of ordinary experience that private charities in cities are generally more attractive than the provision that is made on relief works, and beggars often run away from relief works and get into towns in order to beg at will and subsist on private charity. If the responsibility is thrown on Municipalities to provide for such persons, I think it will be a serious matter for such bodies. I think the utmost the Legislature can reasonably do is to call upon Municipalities to provide for their own poor.

*Speaking on the motion of Sir Charles Ollivant for the third reading of the Bill, Gokhale said :*

I respectfully beg leave to join in the words of appreciation which your Excellency has just now uttered in regard to the labours of the Honourable Sir Charles Ollivant in connection with this Bill. Those members of this Council who took part in the debate on the second reading have already borne testimony to the fact that, but for the honourable member, this Bill would have continued to give occasion for great anxiety and apprehension throughout the Presidency. I am sure the whole Presidency in general, and the municipal bodies in particular, will greatly appreciate this measure when it comes into force. So far as the administrative provisions are concerned, we all feel that they are distinctly very much better than the old provisions, and in regard to the constitutional portions, though here and there there is still some ground for dissatisfaction, we are on the whole satisfied with what we have now got in this Bill. On behalf of the non-official members who were associated with the honourable member in the consideration of the Bill, I once more express our cordial acknowledgments for the admirable manner in which he has guided our deliberations on this Bill.

<sup>1</sup> (2) that to sub-clause 2 (h) of clause 54, the following words be added : " to or for destitute persons within the limits of the Municipal District " which was moved by Sir Charles Ollivant.



PART II

OTHER INDIAN SPEECHES

## THE CRAWFORD CASE<sup>1</sup>

Mr Arthur Traverse Crawford was a member of the Bombay Civil Service and was posted to Poona as Commissioner, Central Division. Allegations of taking bribes and improperly borrowing money even from his subordinates were freely made against him. Out of the 32 charges of the corrupt receipt of money brought against him by the prosecution in 23 cases the bribe money was stated to have passed to him through two intermediaries.

A commission consisting of Messrs A Wilson J W Quenton and R J Crosthwaite, appointed to inquire into these charges against Mr Crawford, held the charges as not proved. The Bombay Government with Lord Reay<sup>2</sup> as Governor found itself "unable to accept their (the Commission's) conclusions in their entirety." In the course of the investigations it was found necessary by the Bombay Government "to offer immunity to some of those implicated in order to obtain sufficient evidence against others." Apparently all this was the subject of misrepresentation in the British press by mischievous correspondents.

A public meeting which was organised by the Sarvajam Sahba was held at the Kabutar Khana in Poona on September 1, 1889. Its purpose was to protest against these misrepresentations in the British press of the actions of the Bombay Government.

Gokhale moved the following resolution at the meeting.

That this meeting wishes to place on record its strong protest against the persistent and factious misrepresentations and perversion of facts by interested writers, whereby public opinion in England is being misled and that the native public of India grieve to find some of the Honourable Members of Parliament, to whom India cannot be too grateful for their honest and disinterested efforts to see justice done to this country, allowing themselves to be influenced by such one-sided and incorrect representations.

In moving the resolution, Gokhale said

You can easily understand how very necessary it is for us to place on record an expression of our opinion on this point. The misrepresentations, of which we have reason to complain, and more than complain have been so gross in their nature and have been made with so complete a disregard of all truthfulness and honesty that they have already done much mischief, and will continue to do more, unless we strenuously exert ourselves to expose their true character. Englishmen in England who have at best very hazy ideas

<sup>1</sup> The impression somehow prevails in some quarters that the speech though prepared was never delivered. Even the chronology of events appended to the Extension Lectures delivered by the Right Honourable V S Srinivasa Sastri under the auspices of the Mysore University describes this speech as "not delivered." There is however no basis for such a statement. A speech which for trenchancy and vigour would do no discredit to Mr Chamberlain. This is how it was characterised by the *Times of India*. And a booklet containing a report of the proceedings of the meeting shows Gokhale as having made this speech in moving the resolution.

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p 117

about Indian questions seem unfortunately to have been even more misinformed than usual with regard to the inception, the scope and the ultimate result of this Crawford inquiry.

*Misrepresentation caused by Mr. Crawford's friends*

Sir, this misrepresentation has been the work mainly, I had almost said exclusively, of a few personal friends of Mr. Crawford in Bombay, a friend of these friends in Calcutta, and a paper in London, which swallows with remarkable simplicity all the trash which the man in Calcutta sends to it. And the astonishing persistency with which the small band of traducers of Lord Reay has worked has been amply successful. Most hasty and erroneous opinions have been confidently expressed by almost the whole public press of England. In deference to these opinions the Secretary of State for India has thought it necessary and proper to interfere, in what, I believe, to be a most unusual manner, with the freedom of action of the Bombay Government, which freedom was absolutely necessary for arriving at as satisfactory a solution as the very complicated nature of this affair admitted, and the result of all this has been that Government has now been landed in a position of almost inextricable difficulty. Well, Sir, we all know, and I believe I have said it already, that the headquarters of this misrepresentation have been in Bombay — I need not say that they have been chiefly in the office of the *Times of India*. Sir William Harcourt,<sup>1</sup> in speaking once of the representatives of the Universities, is reported to have said, if you have abuses to defend or good measures to abuse you may rely on the universities. And we know we here can say a similar thing of this *Times of India* — that if you have Anglo-Indian misconduct to defend or natives and their sympathisers to abuse you may rely on the *Times of India*. This paper has for a long time been proverbial for its hostility to native interests. It delights in the work of misrepresenting, denouncing, or in other ways prejudicing every movement intended for the political advancement of our people. It loses no opportunity to cast foul aspersions on our character and in the art of maligning those who sympathise with the growing aspirations of the natives it knows no superior. And it is evident that every one of these motives, joined to the equally powerful one of helping a friend in distress, operated in determining the attitude of this paper towards this inquiry. For here was gross Anglo-Indian misconduct standing in need of a defender. Here was an opportunity for taking sweet revenge on that "unpractical Radical Governor", I believe it once called him, for the kindly and sympa-

<sup>1</sup> SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT (1827-1904); contributor to *Morning Chronicle* (1855-59); member, Neutrality Laws Commission (1868), and royal commission on laws of naturalisation and allegiance (1870) and on extradition (1878); professor of International Law at Cambridge (1869-87); entered Parliament (1868); chairman, Select Committee to inquire into the law affecting the registration of voters (1871); member, committee to consider civil service expenditure (1873); Solicitor-General (1873); Home Secretary (1880); Chancellor of the Exchequer (1886-95).

thetic interest he has uniformly taken in our advancement, and here was also a chance not to be thrown away for denouncing native morality and for making capital out of the disclosures and to prejudice our political claims. And the nice little story given to the public by the Hon Mr Mehta<sup>1</sup> tells us with what a hearty will the paper went to this work of slander and misrepresentation — how even the permanent editor of the paper, on his return from England, stood aghast at the zeal of his *locum tenens* in the unholy cause. No epithet was considered too strong if it was to be applied to the Bombay Government, no term too contemptuous if it was to be used in connection with native morality, and no effort too unscrupulous if it was in any way likely to succeed in misleading public opinion or increasing the difficulties in the path of the Bombay Government. I intended to give you some samples of the writing of this paper on this case. But there are so many passages claiming to be quoted that it is very difficult indeed to choose from amongst them, and as I may presume that most of you at least read the writings when they first appeared, I had better not attempt the task.

*Mendacity and Unscrupulousness of the Calcutta correspondent of the Times*

But the mischief done by the *Times of India* by its vituperation was nothing compared with that done by the Calcutta correspondent of the *London Times*. The mendacity and the unscrupulousness of this man have been simply shocking to me, as they must have been to every one of you. Now it so happens that the *London Times* is the only paper in England that has a permanent correspondent in India, and consequently, although his hatred of natives and of those who sympathise with them or who expose Anglo-Indian delinquencies is notorious, the English public have no other recourse but to depend upon the *Times* for Indian information, and thus the man occupies a position of great but most undeserved importance. (The speaker here quoted various telegrams in the *London Times* and said) You will see how mischievous and misleading these telegrams are. Every fact favourable to the Bombay Government is carefully suppressed. Take, for instance, the Hanmantrao<sup>2</sup> case. The decision of Mr Vidal in this case furnished an important clue to a right understanding of the whole Crawford affair. And yet not one word was sent about that decision by this correspondent, although at times he has been even so particular as to telegraph such trash as, for instance, the continuance of Mr Forest in a particular place. And now observe the mischief done by these

<sup>1</sup> Mr (later Sir) PHEROZESHAH M. MEHTA (1845-1915), member, Bombay Municipal Corporation and four times its President (1884, 1885-1905 and 1911), a founder member of the Indian National Congress (1885) one of the founders of the Bombay Presidency Association (1885) member, Bombay Legislative Council (1892), member, Imperial Legislative Council (1893-1902) president Indian National Congress (1890), Vice-chancellor, Bombay University (1910)

<sup>2</sup> Mr Crawford's "agent to obtain bribes".

disgraceful misrepresentations, perversions, and suppressions. The *London Times*, which it is the fashion to regard as the most leading paper in England, but which, whether leading or not, is at present certainly the most discredited one there, with pitiable gullibility, if nothing worse, accepted as gospel truth what its Indian Pigott sent to it, and made a most violent attack on the Bombay Government in its issue of the 20th of February. We, who are here and who have all along been able to clearly see the difficult nature of the task of the Government and who have all along been convinced that it was doing all that was in its power in the cause of justice and purity of administration, can of course only laugh at so much display of ignorance and prejudice. But the effect of these misrepresentations on the English public was different. Other papers followed in the wake of the *Times*, and indulged in wild denunciations of the Bombay Government, and with the exception of the *Scotchman* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I am not aware of any paper in England — I use the term England in its wider sense — that ventured to put in a good word for Lord Reay.

### *Too Deep Misrepresentation*

Sir, the impression made by these misrepresentations seems to have been too deep to be effaced even by the publication of papers calculated to throw a flood of light on the nefarious system such as Mr. Ommaney's<sup>1</sup> note, Sir R. West's<sup>2</sup> Minute, and others — papers which, in the opinion of the natives of this country at least, furnish ample justification for the conduct of the Government in every particular. Take, for instance, the debate which took place on the 19th July in the House of Commons on Dr. Cameron's motion about the retention of the Mamlatdars. Even Mr. Bradlaugh,<sup>3</sup> than whom the natives of India have no more sincere or disinterested friend, possibly acting on impressions formed from time to time and for want of better information, took an attitude which seemed unfavourable to the Government of Bombay. I am, however, quite sure that if he had been aware of the real nature of this Crawford affair with its many off-shoots, he would have been as warm as

<sup>1</sup> Inspector-General of Police, Bombay, at the time.

<sup>2</sup> SIR RAYMOND WEST I.C.S. (1832-1912); Registrar, High Court, Bombay (1863); Dist. Judge, Kanara (1866); Judicial Commissioner in Sind (1868); judge, Bombay High Court, (1873-86); member, Indian Statute Law Commission (1879); on special duty in Egypt for the reform of the judiciary (1884); member, Bombay executive council (1887-92); vice-chancellor, Bombay University (1878 and 1886-92); lecturer in Indian law at Cambridge (1895-1907).

<sup>3</sup> CHARLES BRADLAUGH (1833-1891) freethought advocate; carried on freethought propaganda under the name of 'iconoclast'; proprietor, *National Reformer*, from 1862; member, parliamentary reform league (1866); elected to Parliament (1880); was refused right to affirm instead of swearing on Bible; unseated; re-elected (1881); was ejected from House of Commons by force; expelled (1882); re-elected (1882); excluded (1883); re-elected (1884); excluded (1885); again elected (1885); and allowed to take his seat (1886), remaining M.P. till his death. He engaged in several lawsuits to maintain freedom of press.

Professor Bryce<sup>1</sup> or Sir C. Campbell in eulogising the conduct of the Bombay Government Similarly Dr. Cameron — (I will not say anything about Mr. Baumann, for he appears to be a mere tool in the hands of designing persons) — I say even Dr. Cameron, good radical that he is, would have had nothing but praise for Lord Reay, if he had understood how absolutely necessary it was to promise the indemnities for extirpating a huge system of corruption But the wrong impression which he seems to have received at the beginning unfortunately led him to draw up an indictment against the Bombay Government in a manner which indicated at least great carelessness Take, for instance, his reference to the Chowbal case You will see that Dr. Cameron does not seem to have himself understood a word of what he said. All this shows how successful misrepresentation has been

*Persons Living in Glass Houses should not Throw Stones at  
Indians*

So far I have endeavoured to deal with the very important question of perversion of facts and the mischief it has done Before I conclude, I am anxious to say a word about a case which is being at present persistently made against us Advantage is being taken in certain quarters of the revelations in the Crawford case and it is being asserted that the natives of this country are men of decidedly low morals Sir, it is not my purpose to consider here how far Anglo-Indians can twit us on the score of superior morality in general But, so far as this Crawford inquiry is concerned, it is not for these persons, who are themselves living in glass houses, to throw stones at us For I for one do not think that they have displayed in this affair any very extraordinary standard of morality. Anglo-Indians have themselves declared that for the last ten years and more they were hearing persistent rumours of Mr Crawford's corruption Of the so many Assistant Collectors and Collectors and other European officials, that have been in this presidency during the last ten years, how many will stand forth and declare before God and man that they were unaware of Mr Crawford's practices? And if these men, who had really to suffer nothing at the hands of Mr Crawford, were content to leave matters alone and thus allow corruption to spread before their very eyes, it is impossible, Sir, to understand how so many native officials, not naturally inclined to be corrupt, should have succumbed to the system of terrorism and extortion, set up almost publicly by an officer who could have, if he had pleased, ruined them in a minute It is, no doubt, sad that they should have

<sup>1</sup> JAMES BRYCE, VISCOUNT BRYCE (1838-1922), jurist and historian, assistant commissioner, Schools Inquiry Commission (1864-67), lecturer in law at Owens college (1868-74), Professor, Civil Law at Oxford (1870-93), member, House of Commons (1880), Under secretary for Foreign Affairs (1886), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1892), President, Board of Trade (1894), Chairman, Royal Commission on secondary education (1894-95), Chief Secretary for Ireland (1905), Ambassador to America (1907-13), Chairman, joint conference of both Houses of Parliament to consider the reform of the House of Lords

fallen. But they were average mortals and thought more of their families than of a rigid standard of morality. It should also be remembered that it was after all a native officer, who had the courage to approach the Government with a well-formulated indictment against Mr. Crawford. It should also be borne in mind that if veracity and truthfulness have not ceased to be virtues, the claims of those who are the loudest in denouncing the natives to a superior standard of morality must be rejected. In my opinion, it is unwarrantable to draw any general conclusions from this Crawford case. But if unfortunately they are to be drawn, let them be drawn in a fair manner. And I am afraid no community will have cause for rejoicing.

One word more, Sir, before I sit down. It is very painful that the necessity for such a meeting as this should have arisen. Our English friends should understand that in the interests of India and England alike, the Government of this country ought to be carried on with absolute impartiality. They may have won this Empire by force; they may have won it by fraud; but howsoever won, — it is not my business, nor will it be of any use, to go into the question here — in order that it should be preserved, its Government ought to be seated on the high pedestal of truth and fair play. Sir, if our English friends will kindly disabuse their minds of all bias against us, if they will take a calm and dispassionate view of everything, if sentiment will give way to reason, then they will find that in treating the natives of this country with courtesy, consideration and equality, consists the best safeguard of the British Rule. But if, on the other hand, they will be so short-sighted as to think that their interests and ours must always conflict, that every step gained by us is one lost by them, and if in consequence they will raise every opportunity to traduce our nation and even calumniate their high-souled countrymen, then they will be doing a very grievous harm indeed to their Empire over this land. Sir, Lord Reay has suffered much at the hands of these people. But he has presented to us a glorious spectacle of noble courage and scrupulous sense of duty. He has laboured in the cause of justice and purity of administration in the midst of calumny and contumely, amidst the unscrupulous attacks of open enemies and dark stabs of false friends, and though he has not till now received any appreciable recognition of his splendid services at the hands of his countrymen, he need not despair of ultimately receiving that reward, which is his due. For, Sir, I am confident that history will record its unerring verdict in his Lordship's favour. I am sure that posterity at least will do him justice. It will be said that he personally struggled for removing a foul stain from the brow of England. It will be said that he did this work amid difficulties, which might have daunted a stouter man; and, Sir, when all of us, who are at present on the scene, shall have been added to the great majority, and when the names of the present traducers of his Lordship shall have been forgotten and break no more on the ear of man, his Lordship's memory will be cherished with feelings of deep gratitude and affection, not only by the people of this country, but also by his countrymen in England, for his noble exertions in a sacred cause.

## THE POLITICAL DEMAND

*The Congress held at Bombay in 1889 and presided over by Sir William Wedderburn<sup>1</sup> had before it, on the second day (27th December), the following resolution moved by Mr Eardley Norton The resolution ran*

That the following skeleton scheme for the reform and reconstitution of the Council of the Governor General for making Laws and Regulations, and the Provincial Legislative Councils, be adopted, and that the President of this Congress do submit the same to Charles Bradlaugh, Esq, M P, with the respectful request, of this Congress, that he may be pleased to cause a Bill to be drafted, on the lines indicated in this skeleton scheme, and introduce the same in the British House of Commons

(1) The Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils to consist respectively of Members, not less than one half of whom are to be elected, not more than one fourth to sit ex-officio and the rest to be nominated by Government

(2) Revenue districts to constitute, ordinarily, territorial units, for electoral purposes

(3) All male British subjects above 21 years of age, possessing certain qualifications and not subject to certain disqualifications (both of which will be settled later), to be voters

(4) Voters in each district to elect representatives to one or more electoral bodies, according to local circumstances, at the rate of 12 per million of the total population of the district, such representatives to possess certain qualifications, and not to be subject to certain disqualifications, both of which will be settled later

(5) All the representatives thus elected by all the districts included in the jurisdiction of each electoral body, to elect members to the Imperial Legislature at the rate of 1 per every five millions of the total population of the electoral jurisdiction, and to their own Provincial Legislature at the rate of 1 per million of the said total population, in such wise that whenever the Parsees, Christians, Mahomedans or Hindus are in a minority, the total number of Parsees, Christians, Mahomedans or Hindus, as the case may be, elected to the Provincial Legislature, shall not, so far

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Wedderburn, Bart., I.C.S. (1838-1913) Judicial Commissioner in Sind, judge, Bombay High court (1885), member, Bombay executive council for a short time, member, British House of Commons (1893-1900), one of the founders of the High School for Indian Girls, Poona, and of the Alexandra School for Girls Bombay, Chairman Governing Body, Deccan Education Society, Poona (1884-87) helped in starting and maintaining the Congress organ *India* published from London President, Indian National Congress (1889 and 1910)



as may be possible, bear a less proportion to the total number of members elected thereto, than the total number of Parsees, Christians, Hindus or Mahomedans, as the case may be, in such electoral jurisdiction, bears to its total population. Members of both legislatures to possess certain qualifications and not to be subject to certain disqualifications both of which will be settled later.

(6) All elections to be by ballot.

*To the above scheme Mr. B. G. Tilak<sup>1</sup> moved an amendment "that instead of asking the different electoral bodies to elect members to the Imperial Legislature, the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Council should constitute the body to elect members to the Imperial Council."*

In what appears to be his maiden speech in the Congress, Gokhale supported the above amendment in the following words, as recorded in the official report of the session:

I come before you with great reluctance and greater diffidence to second the proposal which has been placed before you by my friend Mr. Tilak. I will briefly state the various reasons for which I am in favour of the amendment as opposed to the original proposition. I should not have troubled you, but I believe that the scheme proposed in the amendment would work better than the one in the original proposal. I will merely enumerate the various points, and say a little in explanation of each.

My first point is that there would be unnecessary trouble. You have already election at two stages, and what we want you to do is to go a little further and have election at three stages; thereby all the cumbrousness of the original method would be avoided, and the thing would be reduced to a simple principle. The presumption is that all the best men will be in the Provincial Council and, if they are there, — I do not see why they should not, — from their own body, depute two, three or four persons to the Supreme Council.

My third point is that there was already an objection to the Local Boards and Municipalities electing representatives to the Provincial Councils. It was said that the persons elected on Local Boards and Municipalities are elected for a different function, and that the persons to be elected on the Legislative Councils have to discharge different functions. No such objection can be raised to the amendment placed before you. The functions of members of the Provincial and of the Supreme Councils are not greatly dissimilar. The objection with regard to Municipalities and Local Boards does not apply in the present case. As my friend who has placed this proposition before you has

<sup>1</sup> BAL GANGADHAR TILAK (1856-1920); joined New English School, Poona (1880); life-member, Deccan Education Society (1884-90); edited *Mahratta* (1881); taught Mathematics and Sanskrit in the Fergusson College (1885-90); resigned from the Deccan Education Society (1890); purchased *Kesari* and *Mahratta* (1890); elected to the Poona Municipality and to the provincial legislature (1895 and 1897); convicted of sedition (1897 and 1908); leader of Home Rule delegation to England (1918); one of the founders of the Congress Democratic Party (1920); author of *Orion*, *Gita-Rahasya*, etc.

said, the system proposed in the resolution is very cumbrous. Whenever there is a vacancy you will have to go through the whole form and there will be a great deal of unnecessary labour I therefore ask you to accept this principle of election at three stages instead of two.

[ The amendment was put and lost ]

## SIMULTANEOUS PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

*At the Bombay Congress of 1889, on 28th December, Gokhale seconded the resolution dealing with the public services question, which was moved by Mr. Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar. The resolution ran as follows :*

That this Congress, while thanking her Majesty's Government for raising the age for the Indian Civil Service Competitive Examination from 19 to 23, do put on record an emphatic expression of the universal disappointment which has been created by the rest of that Government's orders in regard to the Public Service Question (the net result of which orders is to place the people of India in a worse position than they previously held), and reiterate the national conviction that no real justice will be done to India, in this matter, until the simultaneous holding in India, and in England, of all Examinations, for all Civil branches of the Public Service in India, at present held only in England, be conceded.

In seconding the resolution, Gokhale said : I have great pleasure in seconding the proposal which has been placed before you by Mr. Mudaliar. I may mention a fact, of which you may perhaps be aware, that Mr. Mudaliar was himself a member of the Public Service Commission,<sup>1</sup> on the report of which the Secretary of State has passed the orders now under discussion; and I believe that the very fact that Mr. Mudaliar himself is dissatisfied with the orders of the Secretary of State is most eloquent testimony to the view that we present before you, that the Secretary of State has placed us in a worse position than we previously occupied. The vast majority of us were not satisfied with the report of the Public Service Commission itself, and now that one of the gentlemen who signed the report is himself dissatisfied with what the Secretary of State has done on that report, it necessarily follows that the Secretary of State has done something worse than the Commission recommended.

### *Breach of Faith*

I will only make a few observations on this subject, the time at my disposal being very short, although I have much to say with regard to it. First, I will ask you to remember the message which has been sent to us from England by the London correspondent of the *Hindu* of Madras. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji<sup>2</sup> says, that great as has been the breach of faith of the Government where

<sup>1</sup> The object of the appointment of the Commission (1886-87) was declared by the Government of India, which appointed it, broadly speaking, to be "to devise a scheme which may reasonably be hoped to possess the necessary elements of finality, and to do full justice to the claims of Natives of India to higher and more extensive employment in the public services". Sir Charles Aitchison, then Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, was President.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 82.

the Bombay Mamlatdars are concerned, the breach of faith implied in the present orders of the Secretary of State is infinitely greater. Perhaps some of you may think that this is the language of exaggeration, but I can assure you that it is not so. In the first place, Mr Dadabhai Naoroji is not a gentleman who delights to indulge in the language of exaggeration, and secondly, you can easily satisfy yourselves of the absolute truth of what he has said. Fifty-six years have come and gone since the promise was first made that no distinction of race or creed or colour should be allowed to stand in the way of the prospects of preferment of any native of India. That noble promise then made — a promise worthy of the highest and most generous attitude of England towards any of the countries with which she has ever come into contact — was reiterated in yet stronger terms in the proclamation of 1858. The terms of the enactment of 1833 and of the proclamation of 1858 are so explicit that those who now try to withhold from us the privileges then assured to us must be prepared to face the painful dilemma of hypocrisy or treachery — must be prepared to admit that England was insincere when she made those promises, or that she is prepared to break faith with us now.

Gentlemen, you may be aware that an English Judge<sup>1</sup> famous (or infamous) in a way, did not scruple to accept this latter position and propound the preposterous doctrine that the proclamation of 1858 was never meant to be seriously taken. I hope however that there are not many Englishmen of that kind. With these noble promises of 1833 and 1858 before us, I ask you, are we not entitled to say that the least we expect from our English rulers is that they should always show a steadily progressive tendency towards the fulfilment of these promises?

*I had intended to review the whole question, but time is short, and I am afraid of abusing the almost fatherly indulgence of the President. My point is two-fold. First, the Commission which was appointed with such a flourish of trumpets left us in a worse position than we were in before, and secondly, the Secretary of State has left us in a great deal worse position than did the Commission's Report. I want to draw your attention to three points. First, there were competitive examinations before the Commission sat and before the Secretary of State issued his orders. Secondly, there was a Statutory System whereby one sixth of the posts reserved by the enactment of 1861 for the Covenanted Service were to be given to us Indians. Thirdly, what is called the Provincial Service, or the Uncovenanted Service, was, theoretically at least, almost exclusively ours — the natives of India. With regard to these points let me tell you what the Commission did and what the Secretary of State has done. The Commission has rejected the almost unanimous prayer of the whole nation for simultaneous examination in England and India. This is no more than an equitable demand. For posts in our own country,*

<sup>1</sup> Shri T V Parvate author of a biography of Gokhale, identifies, on p. 36, the judge as Sir James Fitzjames Stephen.

if we are not to be examined in our own country, I do not know what justice and equity are. The Secretary of State was only too glad to endorse the judgment of the Commission on this point.

*Posts Reserved for Indians Reduced*

The second point refers to the number of places reserved for us by the rules of 1879 framed under the statute of 1870. The Commission proposed that 108 posts should be taken out of the Schedule of 1861, and should be gradually incorporated with the higher branch of the Uncovenanted Service, to which they gave a new nomenclature, calling it the Provincial Service. This was retrograde. There are 941 posts reserved for the Covenanted Service of India. One-sixth were to be ours by the Statutory Rules of 1879; that means 158. We were therefore entitled to 158 of these posts. The Commissioners however recommended that only 108 posts should be given to us. The Secretary of State however did something worse than this, for he changed the word to "may," and said that we *may* be given 108 places, leaving it to the discretion of the Government; and we know what that means. For every one of these 108 places that we shall have, half a dozen will go to the European official class.

*Demand for Simultaneous Examinations*

As to the simultaneous examinations there can be no difficulty or doubt; or if there are any difficulties the day is not far distant when these will have to be removed. Students of Roman history are aware that the present struggle between the Indians and Anglo-Indians is something like that between the patricians and the plebeians; something like the struggle that has been going on in England, but which is in reality nearly won now, between the classes and the masses, and it needs no prophet to foretell to which side victory must, in the long run, incline.

an exhaustive inquiry into this matter and reported that India was unjustly burdened with many charges which ought in fairness to be borne by the British Exchequer. Naturally Lord Northbrook had then to pay great attention to this subject, and he pleaded the cause of India with great earnestness and force. Then, since his return to England, he presided, with some short intervals up to last year, over a Commission which was appointed by the British Treasury in connection with this matter. His Lordship has thus had this question before him, as he himself stated in the House of Lords the other day for full twenty years. And his utterances in regard to it are therefore entitled to the greatest weight.

### *Home Charges Exorbitant and Unfair*

Then, gentlemen, remember it is not Lord Northbrook alone who has raised this question. Indian public opinion — as represented by Mr. Martin Wood, the late Robert Knight, the late Kristo Das Pal<sup>1</sup>, the late Mr. Naoroji Furdunji,<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji<sup>3</sup> — has in the past often protested against the iniquity of the treatment accorded to India. And before the first National Congress, my friend Mr. Wacha<sup>4</sup> made a remarkable speech on this subject. I call that speech remarkable because, as you will find if you read it, in that speech our friend anticipates Lord Northbrook in many of his complaints. And when you think of that, when you think of the earnest and patient study which our friend has given to this and other equally difficult subjects, I am sure you will say to yourselves — as I said to myself : How much better it will be if some of those who are disposed to find fault with our friend, because sometimes he speaks out his mind too directly and disdains to act on the principle that language is more for the concealment of thought than for its expression would take a leaf out of his book, and devote some portion of their time to a study of these important questions !

### *Growing Home Military Charges*

Then, gentlemen — and this is a matter of far greater importance — successive Viceroys and Secretaries of State for India have, one after another, protested

<sup>1</sup> KRISTO DAS PAL (1838-1884); edited *Hindu Patriot*, then a leading Indian paper; took prominent part in the Calcutta municipal affairs; nominated member, Bengal Legislative Council (1872); and an Additional Member of the Imperial Legislative Council (1883).

<sup>2</sup> NOWROOJEE FURDOONJEE, Assistant Professor, Elphinstone College, Bombay; attached to the British mission to Cabul under Sir Alexander Burnes; Third Translator, Bombay High Court for nineteen years; appeared as a witness representing the Bombay Presidency Association and the Poona Sarvajanjik Sabha before the East India Finance Committee (1871-73).

<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> DINSHAW EDULJI WACHA (1844-1936); member, Bombay Municipal Corporation for thirty years and its President (1901); member, Bombay Legislative Council, Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council of State; president, Indian National Congress (1901); and its General Secretary (1896-1913).

against these charges as excessive and unjust Lord Mayo<sup>1</sup> did this, Lord Northbrook, as I have already said, did in the past and is yet doing it Lord Lytton<sup>2</sup> wrote against these charges and wrote strongly and with his usual candour. The Marquis of Ripon<sup>3</sup> addressed to the Home Government a very earnest remonstrance on the subject Lord Dufferin<sup>4</sup> followed his example and, judging from Lord Northbrook's speech of 15th May last, it would appear that Lord Lansdowne<sup>5</sup> has also recently raised his voice against these charges. Then, as regards Secretaries of State, Sir Charles Wood,<sup>6</sup> Sir Stafford Northcote,<sup>7</sup> the Duke of Argyll,<sup>8</sup> Lord Salisbury,<sup>9</sup> Lord Hartington,<sup>10</sup> Lord Kimberley,<sup>11</sup> Lord Cross<sup>12</sup>—all in their time have remonstrated with the British Treasury and the War Office that the Home Military charges of India were exorbitant and unfair But, as Lord Kimberley himself said the other day, the Secretary of State for India possesses less influence than any other Minister in the English Cabinet, and thus the remonstrances of all these men have hitherto been of no avail It is, therefore, a matter for congratulation that Lord Northbrook has made up his mind to invoke the authority of Parliament to set matters right. And it is also a matter for congratulation that our friends

<sup>1</sup> EARL OF MAYO (1822-72), Chief Secretary for Ireland (1852, 1858 and 1866), Viceroy of India (1869-72), was assassinated at Port Blair (February 8, 1872)

<sup>2</sup> LORD LYTTON (1831-1891), Viceroy of India (1876-80), Ambassador at Paris (1887), author of some books written under the pseudonym "Owen Meredith".

<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p 32

<sup>4</sup> Viceroy and Governor General of India (1884-88)

<sup>5</sup> MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE (1845-1927), Under secretary for India (1880), Governor-General of Canada (1883-88), Viceroy of India (1888-94), Secretary of State for War (1895)

<sup>6</sup> SIR CHARLES WOOD (later VISCOUNT HALIFAX) (1800-1885), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1846-52), president, Board of Control (1852-55), Secretary of State for India (1859-66)

<sup>7</sup> SIR STAFFORD HENRY NORTHCOTE (later EARL OF INDESLEIGH) (1818-87), Secretary of State for India (1867-68), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1874-80), Foreign Secretary (1886)

<sup>8</sup> THE DUKE OF ARGYLL (1845-1914), entered Parliament (1868), Governor General of Canada (1878-83)

<sup>9</sup> LORD SALISBURY (1830-1903), elected M.P. (1853) (as Lord Cranborne) Secretary of State for India (1866-67), and (as Marquis of Salisbury) (1874-78) He was three times Prime Minister of England

<sup>10</sup> MARQUIS OF HARTINGTON (1833-1908), entered Parliament (1857) Under-Secretary at the War Office (1863), secretary of State for War (1866), Post-Master General (1868), Chief Secretary for Ireland (1870) Rector, Edinburgh University (1879) secretary of State for India (1880-82), president, two royal commissions (1) upon the 'civil and professional administration of the naval and military departments' (1890) and (2) upon the 'relations between employers and employed' (1891) President of the Council (1894-1902)

<sup>11</sup> EARL OF KIMBERLEY (1826-1902) Under Secretary for India (1864), Colonial Secretary (1870 and 1880) thrice Secretary of State for India (1882-85, 1886, and 1892-94)

<sup>12</sup> VISCOUNT CROSS (1823-1914), entered Parliament (1857), achieved sensational success in 1868 General Election by defeating Gladstone, Home Secretary (1874), Secretary of State for India (1886-92), Lord Privy Seal (1895-1902)

in the House of Commons, Mr. Caine<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Macfarlane and others, have taken prompt steps to strengthen Lord Northbrook's hands.

Gentlemen, the controversy which Lord Northbrook has raised, and to which alone we confine ourselves on this occasion, refers to that portion of the Home charges which is shown as Military. The total Home charges of India are exceedingly heavy and so is the total Military expenditure. But on this occasion we speak neither of the Home charges as a whole nor of the military as a whole: We confine ourselves only to the Military portion of the Home charges. This charge for the year that has closed has been nearly 5 millions sterling, *i.e.* over 7 crores of rupees. It is, as many of you may be aware, made up of two parts, effective and non-effective, each being about half of the whole. The effective charges chiefly include a large sum annually paid to the War Office, because the British troops serving in India are recruited and sent out here by that Office, an equally large sum for the stores supplied to these troops, a considerable sum for the expenses of the Indian Troop Service, *i.e.* of the transport ships which bring out British troops here and take them back to England, and the furlough allowances of the officers and men in the British Army in India. The non-effective charges consist principally of payment to the War Office for retired pay and pensions of British troops for service in India and pay and pension of non-effective officers and retired officers of the Indian Service. Gentlemen, it is most unfortunate that since the amalgamation of the armies in England and India, *i.e.* during the last thirty years and more, these Home Military charges have been, owing to one thing or another, increasing almost from year to year and this has gone on in spite of strong remonstrances from the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India, only because English Ministers try to relieve English budgets at the expense of India, and the people of this country have no voice in the English Parliament.

I must invite your attention to a few figures to make my meaning clear to you. Thirty years ago, *i.e.* in 1862, the total Home Military charges of India were only a little over two millions sterling. Today they are close upon 5 millions. I will not, gentlemen, weary you with figures for all these thirty years, but I will divide these years into six periods of five years each and give you the average figures for the quinquennial periods. From 1862 to 1867, the average Home Military expenditure was nearly 2 millions a year. In the next period, *i.e.* from 1867 to 1872, it was a little less than 3½ millions sterling. From 1872 to 1877, it was a little over 3 millions, 6 hundred thousand pounds. From 1877 to 1882, it was a little over 4 millions. This average was maintained during the next period, *i.e.* from 1882 to 1887. The tendency of the charges to increase

<sup>1</sup> WILLIAM SPROSTON CAINE (1842-1903); friend of India and temperance reformer; entered Parliament (1880); Civil Lord of the Admiralty (1884); attended the Indian National Congress as a delegate (1890); contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* a series of letters under the caption 'Young India' which ably advocated a large measure of self-government for India; author of *Local Option* (1885).



was for a time checked by a new scheme of making payment for pensions, which was introduced in 1884, and which for the time considerably reduced the annual charge for pensions. From 1887 to 1892, the average was a little less than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions, and for the years 1892 and 93, these charges were close upon five millions. Gentlemen, I hope you now see how these charges have been constantly increasing and how in thirty years have more than doubled themselves. The burden thrown on the Indian revenues by the charges has again, during recent years, been rendered more heavy by the fall in exchange and if you take this fall in exchange into account you will find that India pays today for these charges more than three times of what she paid thirty years ago! Further, this increase appears still more serious when it is remembered that the part of this expenditure, which is under the control of the Government of India, has been steadily reduced and also that Government now purchases a part of the stores in India itself.

### *Monstrously Large Burden*

I will now briefly refer to the principal details of these charges. The first item among the effective charges is the payment annually made to the War Office for the recruitment expenses of the British forces in India. Last year this charge was nearly a million sterling though generally it is about three-fourths of a million. Owing to the amalgamation of the English and Indian Armies in 1859, the Government of India is forced to depend for her British troops on the English War Office, and has, therefore, to pay for their recruitment practically whatever price the War Office demands. There are various interesting points connected with this question of recruitment, but I will not trouble you with them. I will mention to you only one fact, that high military authorities have repeatedly expressed the opinion that the sum demanded by the War Office for recruitment is a most exorbitant one and that if the Indian Government were allowed liberty of action in the matter, it could get the required recruits for a small fraction of the sum. Sir Charles Dilke,<sup>1</sup> who is one of the highest authorities on these subjects, says, in his *Imperial Defence*, that the sum charged at present to India is monstrously large and that, nearly the whole of it could be saved to India, if the Government of India were allowed to take its own measures for the recruitment of its troops.

The next effective charge to which I would call your attention is the charge for stores. The charge naturally varies from year to year, but it is never less than half a million and last year it was nearly nine hundred thousand pounds. Now, here also the discretion of the Government of India is, for the most

<sup>1</sup> SIR CHARLES DILKE (1843-1911) an advanced radical entered Parliament (1868) had republican predilections. his statement that Queen Victoria paid no income tax excited a bitter controversy (1871) moved for a full inquiry into Queen Victoria's expenditure (1872) Under secretary Foreign Office (1876) President Local Government Board (1882), chairman royal commission on the housing of the working classes (1884), Chairman, select committee on income tax (1906)

part, fettered and it has to purchase its stores from the War Office. And the complaint has been repeatedly made that the War Office demands excessive prices for these stores, and practically tries to make a large profit out of the arrangement ! The next item is that of the Indian Troop Service. Gentlemen, I have already explained to you that this charge means the expenses of the transport ships that are built and kept at India's expense for the purpose of bringing out here and taking back again to England the British troops that serve in this country. Last year this charge came to about two hundred and forty thousand pounds. Now it has often been urged, and rightly urged, that there is no necessity in these days to maintain three ships at such enormous cost, because British troops could very well be brought out and sent back like other passengers. The maintaining of these ships by Government for the sole use of British troops involves a large waste of our money, as may be seen from the fact that for five months in the year these vessels do absolutely nothing and yet their establishments have to be paid for all the same during this time. Then there is the question of the furlough allowances. But it is a comparatively small question and I will not go into that on this occasion.

So far I have dealt with the effective charges. As regards the non-effective charges, there are only two principal items and these are payments to the War Office for retired pay and pensions of British forces for service in India and the pay and pensions of non-effective and retired officers of the Indian Service. The first of these two items is not now as heavy as it was before 1884. For the last year it was a little over one-third of a million. But, as was anticipated in 1884, and as was pointed out by Lord Northbrook and Lord Kimberley in their speeches of 15th May, this charge will now rapidly grow, and in a short time, under existing arrangements, it may become heavier than it ever was. It is in regard to this charge that Lord Northbrook stated the other day that, during the last fourteen years, the War Office had taken from India four millions sterling more than was fair or just ! We cannot, therefore, do better than ask the protection of the House of Commons in regard to this charge. As regards the other non-effective item, it is, gentlemen, really a very serious matter ! For the last year this charge stood at the huge figure of about one million nine hundred thousand pounds, *i.e.* about two crores and seventy-five lakhs of rupees. During the last thirty years, this expenditure has more than doubled itself. I am aware, gentlemen, that this part of the question is one which is beset with great difficulties. On the one hand, there are liabilities incurred by the Government in expectations legitimately formed by men in the service. But, on the other hand, there are the claims of the poor tax-payer of India to be considered, and if things are allowed to drift on as at present, there is no knowing to what figure this charge may grow. Our prayer, therefore, is that Government should now look on this item carefully and take whatever measures may be necessary to stop its alarming growth. But, gentlemen, even if it were to be put aside, this large figure of pensions to officers of the Indian Service, a large saving in respect of the other item — effective and non-

effective — is what we are clearly entitled to And, in my humble opinion, the sum so saved will come to from a million to a million and a half sterling, *i.e.* from a crore and a half to two crores of rupees every year, and thus I consider to be a moderate estimate

There is another point raised by Lord Northbrook in his speech which finds a place in your memorial of today England has in the past borrowed troops from India for expeditions undertaken from considerations of Imperial policy, such as the expeditions to China and Persia, the Abyssinian Expedition and others, and on all these occasions, all the ordinary expenses of these troops have been taken from India, England defraying their extraordinary expenses alone On the other hand, when India had to borrow troops from England, as on the occasion of the Sind Campaign of 1846, the Punjab Campaign of 1849, and the Mutiny of 1857, every farthing of the expenses of these men, ordinary and extraordinary, including even the expenditure on their recruitment, was extorted from India<sup>1</sup> I think, gentlemen, I have now made it sufficiently clear to you that for years past India has been most unjustly treated by England in the matter of Home Military charges Our prayer, therefore, now to the House of Commons is that the House be pleased, first, to direct rich England to refund to poor India whatever has been unjustly extorted from her in the past, secondly, to order that no charges, which in fairness, ought to be borne by the British Exchequer, should hereafter be thrown on India, and lastly, to lay down by Act of Parliament the amount or proportion of the non-effective charges of the British forces for service in India, that should hereafter annually be borne by this country Gentlemen, do not suppose that when we ask for a refund of the money overdrawn by England in the past, we are making an unreasonable request For the War Office itself has often in the past acted on this principle by compelling India to pay large sums as arrears and this selfish and despotic Office has at times gone to such a length that even when, owing to its own dilatoriness in presenting bills to the India Office, its claims remained for a time unpaid, it extorted from India afterwards not only the full payment of those claims, but charged interest and, in some cases, even compound interest<sup>1</sup> Then as regards our second request, I think the House of Commons is, in common justice, bound to grant it, and when that is done a substantial relief will come to the finances of India, for a crore and a half of rupees every year means a good deal to the people of this country Then, in preferring the third request, viz for Parliamentary legislation to fix the amount or proportion which we should annually pay to the War Office for non-effective charges, we are only reiterating a proposal made by Lord Ripon's<sup>1</sup> Government in 1883 The advantages of such an arrangement are many and obvious But the most important of these advantages is, in my opinion, this, that whenever these charges are increased they will come to be carefully examined by the House of Commons, because the English charges

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 32

also will be proportionately increased and thus a sort of Parliamentary supervision will be ensured to our own charges. But, gentlemen, before the House of Commons can do all this, it is necessary that it should order a thorough inquiry into the subject and we, therefore, pray in the Memorial that a Select Committee be appointed for the purpose.

### *Intolerable Tax Burden*

Gentlemen, I hope I have made all the points in the Memorial clear to you. I have already taken up too much of your time, but there is one aspect of the question, about which I will say just a word before I conclude. You may be aware how critical the condition of Indian finance at present is. Government has exhausted every available resource and no further taxation is now possible without inflicting intolerable hardship on the poor and miserable millions of this country. The Herschell Committee<sup>1</sup> has practically admitted this fact in its recent report. On the one hand, there is the ever-deepening gulf of the Home charges and the military expenditure necessitating a grasping and relentless revenue policy and an intolerably burdensome duty on the poor man's salt; on the other hand, there are millions upon millions of people, sunk in the lowest depths of poverty and misery, paying taxes far beyond their means, and therefore panting for relief. I think, gentlemen, that, in such circumstances, it is the bounden duty of the Government of this country and of the British Parliament to effect all possible economies in the expenditure of the country and thereby give these millions groaning under their burden the relief they seek. I think a Government which lends a willing ear to the complaints of the well-paid European cannot, in common humanity, shut its eyes to the misery of the poor peasant, who toils and moils from dawn to dark only to find himself badly clothed and worse fed. I think, if Government effects the economies in the Home Military charges which have been repeatedly pointed out to it, the poor man's salt can, at any rate, be made cheaper to him, even if no other relief be possible. Gentlemen, England is strong, but let her not abuse her strength by extorting from poor India more than she has a right to receive. England professes to be anxious to do justice to India. We have had nearly a century of these professions and it is now time we had a little of the practice of the thing. I, therefore, trust that the House of Commons will grant our prayer. It is in this hope that I propose this Resolution and it is in this hope that I earnestly call upon you to adopt it.

<sup>1</sup> The Committee (appointed in 1893) had the following question referred to it: "having regard to the grave difficulties with which the Government of India are confronted through the heavy fall in the gold value of silver, it is expedient that Her Majesty's Government should allow them to carry into effect the proposals which they have made for stopping the free coinage of silver in India with a view to the introduction of a gold standard". Lord Herschell was the chairman of the Committee.

## INDIAN COUNCILS ACT

*The ninth session of the Indian National Congress which met at Lahore from December 27 to 30, 1893 with Dadabhai Naoroji as President had before it on the second day the following resolution which was moved by Mr R N Mudholkar<sup>1</sup>*

That this Congress while tendering its most sincere thanks to His Excellency the Viceroy for the liberal spirit in which he has endeavoured to give effect to the Indian Councils' Act of 1892, regrets to have to put on record the facts, that alike in the Rules of the Government of India and in the practice of most of the Local Governments, notably in that of the Government of Bombay, material alterations are necessary if real effect is to be given to the spirit of this Act, and that the Punjab, one of the most important Provinces in the Empire, is still denied the right to be represented, either in the Viceroy's or in any Local Council

In seconding the resolution Gokhale said I have been asked to second the resolution which has been just now put before you by Mr Mudholkar. The instructions of the Subjects Committee to me are that I should confine myself only to the Bombay Presidency, and I will, therefore, straightaway proceed to a consideration of the rules that have been framed for that Presidency. Gentlemen, in regard to these rules, I will not say that they have been deliberately so framed as to defeat the object of the Act of 1892, but I will say this, that if the officer who drafted them had been asked to sit down with the deliberate purpose of framing a scheme to defeat that object, he could not have done better. Let me briefly explain what I mean.

- There are eight seats that have been thrown open to election in the Bombay Presidency. Of these, two are specifically assigned by the Government of India in their rules, namely, one to the Bombay University and one to the Bombay Municipal Corporation. This leaves six seats, and they have to be disposed of by the Bombay Government at their own discretion. It is in regard to these six seats that we have every reason to complain, for the Bombay Government have distributed them in such a manner that it will for all practical purposes have four of the seats at its own disposal. I must tell you that there are four divisions in the Bombay Presidency, there is, first of all Sind, then the Northern Division, then the Central Division, and then the Southern Division. With these four divisions I think the most natural thing for the Bombay Government to do was to assign one seat to each division, by allowing one to the Municipal and Local Boards alternately and so on, and the remaining two seats to the interests of trade and agriculture. Instead of doing that what Government has done is this. It has given two of the six seats to the European Mercantile

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 60

Community, it has given one to the Sirdars of the Deccan, one to the Zemindars of Sind and only two seats go to the general public of the Presidency ! In this matter Government appears to have entirely subverted the right principles of representation and put minorities above the general public, whereas what Government should always do is, first of all, to safeguard interests of the general public and then take care of the interests of the minorities.

I will now proceed to a more detailed consideration of the whole thing. There are three complaints we have to make. In the first place the European Mercantile community has got much more than it has a right to, whilst the Native Mercantile community of Bombay has been entirely ignored. The Bombay Chamber of Commerce gets one member and the Kurrachi Chamber gets one member. Lord Harris<sup>1</sup> said in one of his speeches that a member was given to Kurrachi because the Chamber there represented trade interest to the extent of about fifteen crores, but you must remember that the Native Mercantile community of Bombay has in its own hands trade to the extent of about 50 crores, but in spite of that fact the Native Mercantile community has not got a single member !

Then there is another complaint, and that is that the Central Division which is the most important division of the Presidency has been left absolutely unrepresented. This division is larger in area, larger in population and larger in the spread of education — generally larger in every respect, than the other three divisions of the Presidency; but in spite of this the Central Division has not been allowed a single seat ! This Central Division has, within its limits, Poona, Satara, and other places which are the home of the Mahratta population. With all these interests the Division has not been allowed a single representative. Then it will be found, if you examine Lord Harris's answers to the various memorials on the subject, that Government takes its stand upon very fallacious principles. Lord Harris said he had to safeguard the interest of a certain class, but he should have remembered that the intentions of the Legislative Act were such that the interests of the general public should be first represented, because ninety-nine out of every hundred acts of legislation affect the interests of the general population. The Bombay Council passes laws like the Forest Act, Police Act, and the Abkari Act, all of which affected the interests of the general public and not of the Chamber of Commerce.

There was another thing that Lord Harris said in order to justify the representation he had given to the Sirdars and Zemindars and it was that these persons were supposed to be representatives of the ancient landed aristocracy, but in regard to these two classes we know that there is practically no education and that they are more or less under the thumb of the Political Officers and therefore, election by these classes does not mean the same thing as election by the Municipalities and Local Boards. What Government say is this : That these two classes have got representation because they represent the agricultural interest.

<sup>1</sup> LORD HARRIS (1851-1932); Governor of Bombay (1890-95).

I think a greater misrepresentation — I don't mean intentional misrepresentation — of the real state of things could not have been made by his Excellency, because if any class deserves to have its interests safeguarded, it is the peasant class and not the landlords, and the Sirdars and Zemindars represent the landlords and not peasants. The interest of the latter can only be represented through the Local Boards whose members are elected by the agriculturists. I believe I have now pointed out the principal defects in the Bombay scheme and I cannot take more time. I must conform to the rules and stop, but in conclusion I should like to say that this expression of opinion on behalf of this Congress must show the Bombay Government and the Government of India what their failing is and I trust they will take an early opportunity to set matters right.

## PLAGUE OPERATIONS IN POONA

When Gokhale left for England early in March 1897 in order to give evidence before the Welby Commission,<sup>1</sup> the plague epidemic was raging fiercely in Poona, causing heavy mortality. While he was in England, information about the "excesses" of British soldiers engaged in the enforcement of anti-plague measures reached him through Poona newspapers and through private correspondence. This information was conveyed by Gokhale to the representative of the "*Manchester Guardian*" when he interviewed him. The following is a full report of the interview, as it appeared in the issue of that paper of July 2, 1897 :

The members of the Indian Parliamentary Committee, at their meeting in the House of Commons yesterday afternoon, heard a brief statement regarding the outrages at Poona from a man who probably knows more of the surrounding circumstances than anybody else now in this country. Mr. G. K. Gokhale, who is Professor of History and Political Economy in Fergusson College, Poona, came over to London three months ago in order to give evidence on behalf of the Deccan Sabha<sup>2</sup> before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure. He has been actively associated with political, educational, and social work in Poona for the past ten or twelve years. When the meeting at the House of Commons was over, Professor Gokhale ( writes a representative of the *Manchester Guardian*) kindly consented to be "interviewed" upon the matter which at present holds so prominent a place in public attention.

"There can be no doubt", he said, "that the deplorable outrages of June 22 are to be connected with the measures taken in Poona against the plague. So far the alarmist writers in the London newspapers are right. But they are wrong both in assigning the blame to "sedition-mongers," whether in the vernacular press or elsewhere, and in regarding the occurrence as a symptom of general unrest. It was a purely local occurrence, due to purely local causes, and capable of simple explanation. The point is that difficult and delicate duties which in Bombay were assigned to native soldiers were in Poona assigned to British soldiers and were kept in their hands in spite of repeated protests from Hindoos and Mahometans alike."

"And your evidence?" I asked.

"My evidence is overwhelming. I saw what was taking place before I came away. I have read the detailed accounts of oppression which the Poona newspapers, avoiding general declamation, have been printing during the past

<sup>1</sup> A Royal Commission appointed to inquire into Indian expenditure with Lord Welby as chairman (1897).

<sup>2</sup> A political association founded in Poona in 1896 with Liberalism and Moderation as its watchwords.



three months, and since I arrived in London I have received many private letters from Poona, giving fresh instances of atrocious outrage and begging me to move in the matter. What has happened is briefly this. When I left Poona on March 5 the work of inspecting, fumigating, and limewashing the houses and searching for plague stricken persons had been entrusted to British soldiers. Most of the people who were at all well-to-do had already left the place, and the arrival of the soldiers spread panic among the poor people who remained. All who could leave Poona promptly ran away. Those who stayed had for the most part suffered tremendously through the famine, and it was upon this highly inflammable material that the soldiers were let loose. Nowhere else had they been employed upon such work. Ignorant of the language and contemptuous of the customs, the sentiments, and the religious susceptibilities of the people, they gave offence in a score of ways which an Englishman could only with difficulty understand. But the nature of many of their excesses is intelligible enough. In defiance of the rules of the Plague Committee, they entered kitchens and places of worship, contaminating food and spitting upon idols or breaking them and throwing them into the street. They destroyed the little property of the unhappy people in a wanton manner — not merely confiscating the clothing and the bedding of persons suffering from the plague, but breaking open boxes, appropriating jewellery, and burning furniture. One of the soldiers appears to have said that it was good fun to have so many bonfires every day, and they seem to have regarded the whole matter as a joke. But that was not the worst. Women were dragged into the streets and stripped for inspection, under the pretext that there was not light enough in the houses, and my correspondents, whose word I can trust absolutely, report the violation of two women, one of whom is said afterwards to have committed suicide rather than survive her shame. Petition after petition was sent to the Plague Committee, calling attention to the disregard of their own rules, and praying that the method adopted in Bombay, where General Gateacre dealt with a more difficult task with conspicuous success, might be extended to Poona. But it was all to no purpose. The complaints were unheeded. A deputation to Mr. Rand, the Plague Commissioner, was snubbed, and when an appeal was made to the Government of Bombay, the fatal regard for what is called in India, 'prestige' prevented the reversal of a policy once started upon. The soldiers accordingly remained to do the work of inspection in Poona until it was finished."

"About what date was that?" I asked.

"The end of May, I believe, or thereabouts."

"So that it is not alleged that the excesses of which complaint is made were being committed up to the time of the assassination?"

"Oh, no," replied Professor Gokhale. "The murder took place some three weeks later. The aggrieved parties, I imagine, must have nursed their revenge and waited for a favourable opportunity."

"And the vernacular press. You do not think it was responsible for much of the excitement?"

“No doubt the newspapers permitted themselves to write wildly, but the angry articles were the result of the irritation, not the cause of it. Let me lay emphasis upon one noteworthy fact in this connection. The relations between the Hindoos and the Mahomedans in Poona have been by no means friendly of late years. Yet in this matter they acted heartily together, and the important memorial which was sent to Lord Sandhurst on May 10 was signed by nearly 2000 members of the two communities, and forwarded by the presidents of the Hindoo and the Mahomedan Associations. Now whatever may be said of the Poona Brahmin, nobody in his wildest moments has ever accused Poona Mahomedans of sedition. To impose restrictions upon the vernacular press would simply be to make matters worse by driving the sore inwards. Lack of sympathy on the part of the Administration has, since the time of Lord Reay, increased the difficulties of those who in the Deccan advocate constitutional methods of agitation and I am perfectly certain that any repressive legislation with regard to the press would increase our difficulties still further. The authorities should think twice before driving the people to desperation. A little sympathy in dealing with the present crisis will go a long way. Nothing, of course, can justify the atrocious murder of Lieutenant Ayerst or the attempt on Mr. Rand's life. Every Indian must regard with horror these deplorable outrages. But, as I said to the members of the Indian Parliamentary Committee just now, the facts brought to light by the Poona memorials and the newspapers may serve to explain to those who know how sensitive the Indian people are in the matter of religious beliefs or of insults offered to women the state of mind in which the people of Poona have been for the past three months. The outrages of June 22 are in some danger of misrepresentation or misinterpretation, but I hope that Englishmen, both here and in India, will not allow their judgment to be warped by the resentment of the hour. Indiscriminate repression never does good to anyone in the long run. The point which needs to be steadily borne in mind is that things have gone smoothly in Bombay, where native soldiers and police, who understand the religious customs of the people, were employed; and all that the people of Poona asked was that a like agency might be employed in their case. If the Government had set out to drive the people of Poona to despair, they could hardly have acted worse. Their conduct in the matter is to the Indians merely incomprehensible.”

The following letters appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* :

Sir, — Perhaps in view of the questions asked in the House of Commons yesterday, it may be well to recall the words which I attributed to Mr. G. K. Gokhale in the account of my interview with him printed in the *Guardian* of July 2. “My correspondents,” I reported him as saying, “whose word I can trust absolutely, report the violation of two women, one of whom is said afterwards to have committed suicide rather than sur vive her shame.” In other words, Mr. Gokhale said (1) that he trusted his correspondents and (2) that their letters contained a certain report. Mr. Gokhale, I may add, has shown me two letters from Poona containing the reports referred to — I am, &c.

July 14, 1897.

The writer of the interview.

Sir, — With reference to the questions asked yesterday in the House of Commons about a statement contained in the report of the interview which your representative had with me some time back, I hope you will allow me to say a word. Sir James Fergusson's question reads as though he thought that the allegation of the violations originated with me. The facts, however, are these. In the month of May last I received several letters from Poona from different individuals complaining bitterly among other things of the violation of two women (one of whom was reported by one correspondent to have subsequently committed suicide). Among these letters there were two from two friends whom I have known for years, and who are incapable of consciously misleading me. They not only corroborated the allegation about the violation but gave me some particulars about one of the two women. I have shown these two letters to some of my English friends. The alleged outrages were also referred to and commented upon in severe terms in some of the vernacular papers, copies of which were sent me. I mentioned all these facts to your representative and he has reported me correctly.

I see from a Reuter's telegram that the Bombay Government have directed Mr Lamb to inquire into the allegations. Under these circumstances is it not rather premature that Lord Sandhurst should stigmatise them as a malevolent invention? I do not say that because these allegations are made therefore they are necessarily true. But I think they ought to have been promptly inquired into at the time when they were first made in Poona so as to prevent a general belief in native circles that there was some foundation for them — I am, &c.

28, Gauden Road Clapham, July 14, 1897

G K Gokhale

*The following is the text of the statement submitted by Gokhale to Government in reference to the interview reported in the Manchester Guardian.*

I beg to submit the following explanation to H. E. the Governor on the subject of certain statements made by me to a representative of the *Manchester Guardian*, a month ago, an account of which appeared in the *Guardian* on the 2nd July last.

2 I may state at the outset that the report of the *Guardian's* representative is, on the whole, a correct summary of what I said to him. Of course he had to condense an hour's conversation into a column of his newspaper, and this circumstance has led to a little obscurity in a few places. The arrangement, moreover, is throughout his own, as is also the wording in some parts. Subject to these explanations, the report may be accepted as accurate.

3 The day before yesterday, when I arrived in Bombay, two representatives of the press saw me on board the *Caledonia*, and asked me to explain how I had stated to the *Guardian* representative that I had myself seen plague operations in Poona before leaving for England. The question surprised me, as I had no recollection that the interviewer had reported me as saying so. And I remarked to them that if that was the report in the *Guardian*, it was certainly inaccurate. I have since procured a copy of the report, and I find that it is not necessarily inaccurate — only it is somewhat obscure. One of the first questions put to me by the interviewer was how far I had personal knowledge of what had taken place in Poona. I told him distinctly that I was not in India when the operations actually began, but that while I was in Poona arrangements were being made for dealing with the plague effectively, and that by 5th March

— the day on which I left Poona — it was already understood that European soldiers were to be employed on plague duty, and a general exodus had begun. Here the interviewer interrupted me and wanted to know what was the nature of the plague duty. I said that as far as I could gather, it was inspecting houses, searching for plague patients, removal of the sick to hospitals and of the healthy to the segregation camp, fumigation, lime-washing, &c. Now all this has been compressed in the *Guardian* in the following sentence: "When I left Poona on March 5, the work of inspecting, fumigating and lime-washing the houses, and searching for plague-stricken persons had been entrusted to British soldiers." The sentence is no doubt somewhat obscure, but it does not necessarily mean that I had myself seen soldiers at work.

4. I used to receive Poona newspapers for some time regularly during my stay in England. I reached London on March 20th, and from that time, for about two months, these papers contained the bitterest complaints and lamentations in regard to the operations of the Plague Committee. Even papers which I had always regarded as very sober and cautious wrote with extraordinary vehemence on the subject. There was no mistaking the depth or intensity of feeling in the matter, and to a man judging from a distance of 5,000 miles, so much feeling was simply unintelligible except on the hypothesis that dreadful things were going on in Poona! Week after week I went on reading these things, and not a line, not a word appeared on the other side during all the time to warn or caution any one that these writings were not to be relied on. My private letters from Poona only strengthened and emphasized the impressions gathered from the newspapers. Several people addressed to me, on the strength of a slight acquaintance, piteous appeals to do something to help them in their distress, and personal friends, whom I had known for years, and who were, I thought incapable of misleading me, consciously, used the privilege of private communication for reporting to me worse things than had openly appeared in the papers. When I read all these things, and when I saw the Hindus and Mahomedans in Poona forgetting their differences and submitting joint memorials, when I saw in the memorials of the Deccan Sabha evidence of unusual panic and demoralization, when I saw even the *Indian Spectator* — a sober journal, if there is one in India — declaring that in Poona a deaf ear had been turned "even to verified complaints of wanton damage to property and injury to body and mind," my mind became disposed to believe almost any complaint coming from Poona and lost all capacity for discrimination in the matter.

5. I had however absolutely no thought of mentioning these things in England, and before the 23rd June, when the terrible news of the ghastly tragedy of the previous night arrived there, I had not said a word about them to any one, except two or three individuals, even in private conversation, and had never made the remotest allusion to them in public addresses. To some of the men in Poona, who had asked me to do something for them, I had written back to say that H. E. the

Governor<sup>1</sup> was the proper person to approach for redress in the matter and that it was ignorant to think that the authorities in England could be troubled with advantage in such cases. The first shock and sensation caused by the news of the outrages of the 22nd June were followed by a tremendous feeling of popular uneasiness in England, such as I had never witnessed anywhere before. The news of the Chitpur riots came at the same time to aggravate the situation. The average English mind could not understand that there was no connection between the two occurrences, all that appeared clear to them was that in both places Hindus and Mahomedans were acting in sympathy and concert and murdering or otherwise assaulting Englishmen. Sensational telegrams poured into the columns of the Press day after day, bringing news of seditious writing or preaching, of the circulation of seditious pamphlets, even of personal insults levelled at Her Majesty the Queen Empress herself. Letters and articles appeared in the Press on all sides that disaffection and disloyalty were rife in India, and that serious trouble was brewing. The condemnation of the educated classes in general, and of Poona Brahmins in particular was for a time almost universal. And the party that has been working for constitutional reform in India came to be associated in the popular mind with assassination and rioting. Owing to the great influence of the Press in England, English public opinion sometimes comes and overwhelms like an avalanche formed and moving almost before one has time to think. And I certainly felt, and several friends agreed with me, that our character for loyalty was being hopelessly damaged. For the first six or seven days, however, I did nothing. I had hoped that the perpetrators of such foul and audacious murders could not remain long concealed, and would be swiftly tracked, and then the air would clear almost as quickly as it had become threatening. Every day's delay, however, while weakening our position added to the just impatience and resentment of the public mind. Summary methods of dealing with the crisis were freely advocated. It was reported that repressive Press legislation would be almost immediately undertaken. The announcement that the Collector of Poona had informed the citizens that unless the culprits were forthcoming they all would undergo experiences of which they never had any taste since British rule began, followed by the imposition of a heavy punitive force, left no doubt in my mind that punishment—swift and terrible—was descending on my unhappy city, and that the brand of general disloyalty was being placed on our brow. Then I felt that it was incumbent on me to act. Our loyalty is our only claim on England for a sympathetic, progressive and enlightened rule, and I feared that if our character for loyalty was lost, our best national interests would be injured beyond repair. And as I honestly believed that the irritation caused by the plague operations and not

<sup>1</sup> LORD SANDHURST (1855-1921) Under Secretary for War (1886-1892-94), Governor of Bombay (1895-99) a member of a committee sent by the British Government to South Africa in 1906 to report on the subject of representative government for that country

disaffection must have been at the bottom of the tragedy of the 22nd June, I felt it was my duty to endeavour to avert the impending misfortune. I consulted a few friends, who agreed with me that it was absolutely necessary to place our view of the matter before the public with such information as I thought I had in my possession and that I had not a moment to lose. The first idea was to lay the whole thing before the Secretary of State for India, but unfortunately it was not found possible to arrange that. I then placed everything unreservedly before the Indian Parliamentary Committee, and also communicated it to a representative of the *Manchester Guardian*.

6. As regards the allegations themselves, H.E. Lord Sandhurst has authoritatively stated that from all enquiries made by Government he is satisfied that they are wholly devoid of foundation. Under these circumstances, I withdraw all the allegations unreservedly and tender an unqualified apology for having made them.

7. I feel that in addition to this general withdrawal, special apology and retraction are necessary in regard to the most serious allegations, namely, alleged violation of two women, one of whom was further alleged to have committed suicide. I made these statements on the strength of letters received in May last from persons whose general trustworthiness I had no reason to doubt. The statements were condemned in the House of Commons as malevolent inventions on 13th July. I left England by the mail of the 16th, and on my arrival here, I put myself at once in communication with my correspondents. It will be seen that I could not have communicated with them earlier except

sympathy and respect from every quarter. And even now, when I fully realize the humiliating position in which my action has placed me, my bitterest regret is caused by the thought that I became the instrument of adding to the terrible anxieties of H E the Governor at a time when he must have had the greatest difficulty in preserving the equanimity of his mind. I also feel most keenly that while a few Englishmen at least in this country have been not only just but even generous in judging me, I have been much less than just to their countrymen — the soldiers engaged on plague operations, and have made grave unwarranted charges against them, when they were engaged in work which required that their critics should be not only just to them but even generous. I once more tender an unqualified apology to all to H E the Governor, to the members of the Plague Committee, and to the soldiers engaged in Plague operations. I will send a copy of this letter for publication in the *Manchester Guardian* by the next mail — I am, &c

Bombay, August 1, 1897

G K GOKHALE

### *Lord Sandhurst's Speech*

*Lord Sandhurst, Governor of Bombay, devoted considerable portion of his speech in which he summed up the budget debate in the Bombay Legislative Council on Wednesday, 4th August 1897, to an examination of the plague operations in Poona. The following extracts from the speech are reproduced here, as they bear on the allegations made by Gokhale on the subject in England*

In regard to one statement I put the words "malevolent fabrication" into the mouth of the Secretary of State. The statement was that women were brought down into the streets and stripped to be examined. For this statement there was no foundation whatever. As you are all aware, a great many houses in Poona are extremely dark, and, in fact, it is almost impossible to see into them. It was considered necessary, if possible, to get all the inmates of such houses, not always into the street, but into some lighter room or into a court-yard to see if they looked ill. If there were indications that the persons were not in good health, a medical inspection did ensue, but with every regard to decency.

A still more malevolent invention was the allegation that two women had been violated by British soldiers and that one of them had committed suicide. Well, some silly person has observed that Mr Lamb was making enquiries into this charge, after I had informed the Secretary of State that it was false, and said it was a pity that I had given this extreme contradiction without having first made these enquiries. The man who made this remark must have been very ignorant of the ordinary way in which business is carried on. Who would suppose that I should go and deny any statement without first making enquiries as to whether there was any possible foundation for it? I did make such enquiries before I telegraphed to the Secretary of State, and if the man who blames me for being, as he thinks, too hasty in the matter, had read the telegram, as given by

the Secretary of State in the House of Commons, he would have seen that what I telegraphed was this : "From all enquiries I have made, I am convinced that this is a still more gross and malevolent invention than that about stripping of women." Enquiries have been made of all the persons attending the search parties, and as far as I have been able to ascertain from their replies, only one of them had ever heard even a rumour of ill-treatment of women, and on inquiry could find no basis for the rumour.

Then it is true that an apology, and a withdrawal has been made by a gentleman whose name was prominently for a few days before the public, but it is very easy thousands of miles from here to make statements which have not a shred of foundation, but which such a man may deem good enough for the English people — statements which show this and show that. That is very easy. It is also very easy to come back and say "I was misinformed, and I apologise," but the harm has been done in spreading abroad these foul unfounded accusations and attacks, and while I recognise that the apology has been made I might tender the advice that in future when it is thought necessary, as it may be at times, to offer criticism — and I have never complained of criticism — if it is necessary to make statements of that kind they should be made here where they may be enquired into, and, if untrue, contradicted, and not made so that they gain currency all the world over before an answer can be given.

### GOKHALE'S REPLY TO HIS CRITICS

To The Editor of the *Times of India*,

Sir, — I shall deem it a great favour if you will kindly find space for the following letter in an early issue of your paper.

2. Last week, at Amraoti, when I had an opportunity to meet Congress friends from the different Provinces, I became aware that there was still, in certain quarters, — especially among friends in the more distant parts — a strong feeling of resentment at the retraction, which I felt bound to make on my return from England, of the statements published in the *Manchester Guardian*. Of course when I made that retraction, I was perfectly prepared for a storm of indignation and disappointment among my countrymen, but I had hoped that after the first excess of feeling was over, the real situation and its requirements would come to be better understood and then it would be generally recognised that I had taken the only honourable course open to me, and had courageously performed a most painful duty under very trying circumstances. Five months have now elapsed and I find that, while the first misunderstanding has been cleared up to a certain extent in some quarters, in others it has grown only deeper. Many uncharitable things have been said during the time — some based on unfortunate excusable misapprehension, others on ungenerous surmises. I think, therefore, that the time has come when I should break my self-imposed vow of silence, observed by me during these long months, and make an effort to set forth, in a public manner, the correct facts of the situation. I am sorry thus to thrust myself once again on the attention of my countrymen, but I feel that I owe this duty to the public interests involved in the matter.

3. The principal objections, urged in private conversations and public comments against my conduct in this most deplorable incident are : (1) That I should not have published the contents of private letters in England. (2) That I should not have made the retraction on my return, as thereby, I have, among other things, brought humiliation on Sir William Wed-



derburn<sup>1</sup> and other English friends, and have done very serious injury to the Congress cause' (3) *That the retraction was too long, too humble and that it went too far*

4 As regards the first objection, I have already admitted that in the excess of my zeal to serve the interests of the Indian public a very unfortunate mistake was committed. All that I have ever claimed for myself in that respect is that I acted all along under a conviction *that I was performing a most painful duty, and that I felt I was acting for the best*. The English public in all ranks of life was stirred to indignation by the thought that the unfortunate murders were the result of a deep laid political conspiracy in which the educated classes were actively concerned. The cry for repression and vengeance was almost general. The situation appeared to be fraught with the greatest danger to Indian interests, and a supreme effort was wanted to break the force of the anti-Indian feeling. I rushed into the flames thinking that it was my duty to do so, as the only way to save our interests — though every instinct of self was counselling me to keep away — and I have come out badly burnt. No one can have regretted the mistake more than myself, and I shall probably continue to regret it long after others have forgotten the incident.

5 As regards the opinion that I should not have retracted at all, but taken whatever consequences might have ensued, I must say that those who expressed this opinion do not know what they are talking about. It seems to be supposed by these men that I lacked the courage to face a great trouble and have thereby brought a disaster on the nation's cause. As a matter of fact, however, it is precisely because, I did not lack the sort of courage that was needed to face my trouble like a man that I took the course which has brought so much obloquy on me. Many people fail to realise that it requires courage of a much higher order to reconcile us to the kind of humiliation that I found was in store for me on my return, than to bear mere personal suffering or privations. There was never any personal danger for me, as the expression is ordinarily understood. Owing to technical difficulties if for no other considerations, the law could not have been set in motion against me. But the very fact that the injured parties had no legal redress against me only made my responsibilities as a gentleman all the greater. The charges to which I had given currency were not like ordinary charges — the usual weapons of political warfare — but were grave accusations, imputing disgraceful personal conduct to men who had been engaged in very difficult and disagreeable work, and if I was unable to substantiate them on any account, it was my clear duty to withdraw them unreservedly, and make the fullest reparation in my power. Before landing in Bombay, I used to think, that, considering the crisis, and considering what the newspapers had been writing for weeks — let alone private correspondents — a fair amount of substantiation ought not to be impossible, even making allowances for the peculiar conditions of Indian life. On my return to Bombay, however, it did not take me long — some of the men who had written to me were there to greet me — to discover that substantiation was out of the question, and the amplest apology that I could offer thus became the only alternative. It was a fiery ordeal. After four months' hard — and till then, by common consent, useful — work for my countrymen in a far off land to return to my country and find this bitter cup of humiliation awaiting my arrival, to have to give cause to our opponents for triumph and exultation, and face indignant reproaches of my disappointed countrymen! But what was to be done? The situation had to be accepted, as many before me have had to do under similar circumstances, as an attendant evil of overzeal in a public cause.

As regards the humiliation brought on Sir William Wedderburn<sup>1</sup> and the injury done to the Congress cause, few men can imagine what intense suffering the thought has caused me during the last five months. In addition to the feeling of gratitude and affectionate esteem which I entertain for Sir William in common with my countrymen, there were special ties formed during my four months' stay in England. I had opportunities, as few have had, of watching his singular devotion to our cause and had received much personal kindness

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 143

at his hands. And I would have most cheerfully made any sacrifice of myself — no matter how grave — if thereby I could have honourably spared Sir William the awkward position into which my retraction was bound to place him. But knowing Sir William as I do, I am sure he himself would have been the first to disown me, if he had seen that after discovering my mistake I had shrunk from the duty of making the necessary reparation, simply because it was likely to bring humiliation to him, or obloquy to myself. The same is true of the injury to the Congress cause. No sacrifice would have been too great for me if I could have honourably acted otherwise. But, substantiation being out of the question, some injury was unavoidable, and the present injury was the minimum injury possible under the circumstances. After all it was better that it should be said that Sir William and other English friends had been for four months associating with a man who was indiscreet or credulous, but who was at any rate a gentleman, than that it should be said that they had been associating with one who, in addition to being indiscreet or credulous, was a coward, who shrunk from a necessary act of reparation, because it was disagreeable and humiliating, and likely to lead to inconvenient results. Some men talk of the injury that has been done as though we were on the eve of our political emancipation, and that my action snatched from the country the fruit of the long struggle in the very hour of victory. These men do not realize that the real work has only just begun, that disasters such as the present one, however deplorable, are more or less inseparable incidents of public life, and of a struggle that has to be carried on at a distance of five thousand miles between parties that are most unequally matched, and that years of patient toil and endurance, attended by frequent reverses and misfortunes, will be required before the incubus of a long unhappy past is successfully lifted up. Meanwhile we must find strength and consolation in the fact that no great or just cause is ever really served by miserable subterfuges or can be permanently injured by the honest errors of an individual, no matter who he be.

6. About the length of the apology, it is not necessary for me to say much. It is not every one who is endowed with the faculty of joining brevity with clearness. I had to explain, first, how I came to believe the statements made; secondly, I had to explain that they were published: not that only, but owing to what was considered by me and others to be a most painful duty; and thirdly, I had to make such reparation as lay in my power. I could not do all this and yet be briefer. As regards the opinion that the apology was too ample, I do not yet understand what is meant by this charge. The terms in which retraction is made must depend upon the nature and amount of regret that one feels for what has happened. The position in which I stood was a hateful one. I had given currency to disgraceful accusations which I found on coming here my correspondents were unable to substantiate. In giving that currency I have not uttered a single word of generous recognition of the difficulties of the men accused — the result of my having kept looking too long at one side of the shield only. As a consequence of what I had done, the name of the British soldier had been brought into disrepute on the Continent. The value of an apology lies in the reparation that is made to the injured party, and in making amends I had to take the measure of the injury done to the feelings, not of the man who might have misbehaved, but of the man who had done his work honestly and well, and who found that after that hard and disagreeable work — involving a certain amount of risk to his own life — had been done discredit had been thrown on him at a distance of 5,000 miles in his own home. I have tried to find out from my critics which particular portion of the apology is regarded by them as too humble. So far only one definite point has been mentioned to me — namely, that I should not have coupled the name of the soldiers with my expression of regret. But it was the soldiers whom I had injured more than any one else, and surely the fact that they were men in a humble station of life, or that there was much feeling against them among my countrymen, ought not to have deterred me from making the reparation to which they were entitled. The last point urged in this connection is that my retraction went too far. But after being discredited in regard to the most serious of my statements, it was necessary for me to drop myself out of the controversy altogether. If I had known anything personally, I should certainly have adhered to that. But personally I knew nothing, and

with the exception of Pandita Ramabai very few persons were firm. The Pandita's statements had, however, nothing to do with the conduct of the search parties, to which alone my complaints had reference and I could not honestly take my stand on them. It thus became impossible for me to remain associated with the complaints any longer. Moreover, in the situation that had been developed in Poona, as I saw it on my arrival here — with the angriest passions aroused on one side, and fearful suffering from famine and plague already undergone on the other — it would have been positively wicked of me, if I had not done all I could to bring back a better understanding between the two sides, and to some extent at any rate, relieve the tension that had become intolerable. It is impossible for me to explain here all the circumstances of that time, but those who knew them by experience and realized their gravity have recognized that I rendered a service to this ill-fated city and its unhappy people by the course which I decided to adopt.

7 The manner in which Lord Sandhurst spoke of my retraction in the Council is also urged against me by some critics as a reproach. It may be that his Excellency was thinking too much of the fact that the charges had been published at a long distance, where they could not be immediately contradicted, and that he did not seem to make sufficient allowances for the difficulties of those who had, in a grave crisis, to stand up for their countrymen, against whom also charges of general disloyalty and wholesale complicity in crime had been made at a distance of five thousand miles, and who, moreover, had not the command of the telegraphic wire as the Secretary of State had. But the manner in which my apology was received — how was that any business of mine? Many Englishmen are still sore on the point, though in the case of one of their own race they would, perhaps have recognized long ago that if a serious mistake was made the man who was responsible for it had done all in his power — he could do no more — to make the necessary amends. Many of my countrymen, too, are, I find, still angry, though for a different reason. What then? as Burke once asked I was bound to do most painful duty and that I have done. How others regard that performance is more their affair than mine.

8 My countrymen must not confound an apology with the traditional prostration to save one's own skin. The misunderstanding in my case has, moreover, derived sustenance from certain groundless surmises and misapprehensions. For instance, it seems to be believed in some quarters that my retraction was due to a threat held out by the Police Commissioner on board the steamer. The suggestion is most unjust both to the Government and to myself. Mr Vincent, who behaved with great tact and consideration, left it entirely to me to decide whether I would meet his wishes and have a talk with him on the steamer. His object, as far as I could see, appeared to be to get from me the names of my correspondents, and, if possible, to have a sight of the letters — also to commit me, if he could, to specific details about the supposed aggrieved parties before I had seen any one on the shore. I declined politely but firmly to oblige him in any of the particulars, merely telling him that he might rely on my acting in a perfectly straightforward manner in the matter. I have kept with me a note of my conversation with Mr Vincent made that very day at the instance of a tried friend. Another mischievous impression, accepted as a fact by many, is that my retraction was drafted by the editor of the *Times of India*. I wonder how or where this miserable little story came to be coined. Mr Bennett had no more to do with the drafting of my apology than the man in the moon. The only charitable explanation that I can think of for the story is that, when the statements to which I had given currency were condemned as malevolent inventions, the editor of the *Times of India*, while fiercely denouncing my community, felt himself bound in fairness to me — then an absent man — to say that "from what we know of Mr Gokhale, he is the last man consciously to mislead the public even in matters in regard to which he feels keenly." Perhaps this was all the sand of which some well meaning persons set themselves to make a rope.

9 Many harsh things have been said of me during these five months. Not, however, that all have judged harshly. There have been those who have extended their kindly sympathy to me and have helped to make the blow more bearable. Foremost among these I must mention

Sir William Wedderburn. He has not only acquitted me of all blame, but has, in generous terms, recognized the necessity of the course taken by me and has written to express his "truest sympathy for what you have most undeservedly undergone." Another English friend — one of the greatest friends of the Congress — wrote to me on reading the retraction and the private letter which accompanied it : " Pray do not fancy you have lost any ground with us. Do not apologise to us. We look upon you as a martyr to the cause, and are more ready than ever to aid, and, so far as we can, stand by you." A third English friend, also a great well-wisher of our country, from whom I had received the greatest kindness in England, wrote : " Our affection and esteem for you is intensified rather than diminished by the crisis through which you have passed. May God bless you ? " A lady, whom it was a privilege to meet and become friends with, wrote : " The greatest consolation I can offer you is that those who know you personally must fully realize that what you did was prompted by motives of profound zeal and true patriotism." An English friend in this Presidency — one of the best friends of the educated Indians and their aspirations — wrote to me as soon as he read my apology : " I was glad to see from you an explanation so full and frank. It was handsomely done . . . . I am very sorry for your troubles, but very glad that so far you have acted like a man." Another Englishman, who returned with me to India, and whose acquaintance I formed only after leaving London, wrote to say that he applauded the courage and thoroughness with which I had discharged a most painful duty. Several of my Indian friends have been equally kind — foremost among them being the gentleman at whose feet I have now sat these many years as a pupil. Whenever any judgment passed on my conduct appeared to me to be particularly harsh or uncharitable, I have thought of these expressions of opinion and felt comforted.

10. I have no doubt about the ultimate verdict on my conduct. The day will come when it will be generally recognized by my countrymen that this most unfortunate incident deserves to be thought of, as far as I am concerned, in sorrow and not in anger, and that under most trying circumstances I had taken the only course which was consistent with duty and honour. Meanwhile I am content to wait. Trials and troubles, accepted in the right spirit, only chasten and elevate. All that is necessary for me to do is to go on doing my duty, whether it be sunshine or shade. Public duties, undertaken at the bidding of no man, cannot be laid down at the desire of anyone. Whether one works on a higher plane or a lower one is a matter comparatively of small importance. One is always glad of the approbation of the public of what one has done. It is an object of legitimate satisfaction : it is also more — it is a source of strength and encouragement, and, moreover, in this country it constitutes the only reward in public life. But it is not the highest purpose of existence, nor nearly the highest. If it comes — to use the words of Herbert Spencer — "Well; if not, well also, though not so well."

Fergusson College, Poona, January 7.

G. K. GOKHALE.

### *Lord Sandhurst's Appreciative Reference*

In the course of his speech, on Thursday, 24th August 1899, summing up the budget debate, speaking about the plague operations in Poona, Lord Sandhurst, Governor of Bombay, observed :

Two years ago, it will be remembered, it was my duty to comment somewhat severely upon a report which had been spread by Professor Gokhale owing no doubt to his having been misinformed. I pointed out then that at any rate he should have been more careful about his information before propagating such damaging statements. Anxious as I was, however, to refute these statements on that occasion, no less anxious am I to avow that there is no more hard-working, generous and sympathetic worker amongst the plague volunteers than Professor Gokhale.

## OUR POLITICAL SITUATION

*On Monday, the 25th July 1904 the public of Madras assembled in large numbers at the Pachayappa's Hall to give a public welcome to Gokhale. The hall, was however, overcrowded and several thousands could find no accommodation within. The meeting was therefore, held in the spacious maidan opposite the College. Dewan Bahadur A. Krishnaswami Row, retired Dewan of Travancore presided and referred in graceful terms to Gokhale's services to the people. Gokhale made this speech in reply.*

It is difficult for me to find words to convey in any adequate manner my sense of the overwhelming kindness with which you have received me this afternoon. I hope there may arise no circumstances which may ever lead you to regret the welcome — the generous welcome — that you have accorded to me today, and, for my part, I shall only say this, that the recollection of this kindness will not easily fade from my memory. Gentlemen, in a vast concourse like this, it is hopeless to expect that my words will reach every one of you. I will, however, try to say what I have to say in as brief a manner as possible so as not to detain you long in any case. You are, perhaps, aware that I have come to Madras in my capacity as Joint Secretary of the Indian National Congress. It was in this city of Madras that I was appointed to this office last December. Unfortunately pressure of duties elsewhere prevented my coming to Madras at the time when my appointment was made. But perhaps it was as well, seeing that the weather at that time did not permit the men who came from different parts of the country to have anything like a large interchange of ideas. Well, I have come now to have that interchange of ideas and compare notes with friends here, and my only regret is that I am unable, owing to the shortness of the time at my disposal, to visit those centres of political activity in the mofussil to which I have been so kindly invited and which I myself would be very glad to go and see. However, I hope that it is for me only a pleasure postponed and that circumstances will permit my making a somewhat extended tour of this Presidency some time next year.

### *Loss of Faith in Political Agitation*

Gentlemen, I have now been for about twenty years in public life. I mean such public life as we have in this country, and this means that I have been able to follow the fortunes of the National Congress from its very start because this is the twentieth year since that institution first came into existence. During the last few years I have also had special opportunities to become acquainted with the trend of thought and events in various parts of India, and one thing I have noticed which there is no mistaking. In many of our papers, in the utterances of many of our leading men, in the discussions that take place, in the freedom of private conversation, you find everywhere that the predominant

note in regard to political agitation is one of despair. It seems that a kind of *despondency* is setting over the national mind. People have already begun to ask openly the question, what has the Congress done during the nineteen years that it has been in existence? Some others alter the form of the question and ask, is it possible for the Congress to achieve anything substantial, if its work is continued on the lines on which it has been carried on so far? There are some who go even further and try to urge on us the practical futility of political agitation such as that in which we are engaged. They say that the history of the world furnishes no instance in which such an agitation has ever brought any privileges to those who agitated, and they advise us that it would be the part of wisdom on our part to give up political agitation and devote our energies, such as they are, to the industrial development of the country. Thus, whatever you may think of these views, one thing is clear, that our leading workers, many of them, not all, are gradually, but steadily, losing faith in our political agitation. Now, if there were any real justification for this feeling of despair, the outlook would be dark indeed. But is there any real justification?

### *Ideas and Hopes of Founders*

That is the question that I would like to put to you, just as that is the question that I very often put to myself, whenever a feeling of despair tends to assail me. The whole position requires to be examined calmly and dispassionately. And for that purpose you have to ask yourselves two or three questions. You may first of all ask yourselves: what were the thoughts and ideas of those who began this political work? What were the hopes and aspirations that were close to their hearts? Then you have to ask yourselves: what were the conditions under which this work was undertaken by them? What are the conditions under which this work has to be done now, and whether there has been any change or alteration of late in these conditions? These are the questions which you must put to yourself if you are anxious to examine the situation correctly. With regard to the first question as to what were the thoughts and ideas of those who started this work, and what were the hopes and aspirations that lay close to their heart, the answer is, I believe, not far to seek. Those men first of all wanted to act as interpreters between the rulers and the ruled to explain, on the one hand, to the people the intentions of the Government, and to represent, on the other, to the rulers the grievances of the people. This was the first part of political agitation, and it is being performed on the whole not badly, though of course there is considerable room for improvement. But more than this, they wanted to work for the triumph of those larger principles on which our hopes for the future of our country are based. It was their aspiration that the disabilities under which we labour at present might become less and less, and that in the fulness of time we should have the full rights of that British citizenship to which we have been admitted only in name at present. This was the second, and in one sense the higher, part of our political agita-

tion. It is in connection with this that the principal difficulties of the position arise, and the judgements that are so often pronounced about the success or failure of political agitation are also mostly in reference to these

### *Conditions of Our Work*

Now, gentlemen, let us turn to the second question What were the conditions under which the proposed work was to be done, what were the conditions which our leaders then had got to realise and which we, who take up their work, have got now to realise in connection with this work ? We have got to realise that on one side of us are arrayed forces of racial ascendancy, of monopoly of power, and on the other side is a vast mass of ignorance, apathy and moral helplessness. Between these two we have to work, to face, to try to overcome the forces marshalled against us on one side and to quicken into life and to move into energetic action the vast mass on the other. Now this meant a most formidable task, and we had no right or business to imagine that it would prove to be any other. We had no reason to expect that the citadel of monopoly would capitulate at the first assault and we have only ourselves to thank if we are now disappointed in such unjustifiable expectations. Remember, gentlemen, that those who are arrayed against us and in whose hands there is the monopoly of power—they have behind them practically the vast resources of Government, in any case they have behind them the moral support of the Government of the country. Moreover, it is but fair to acknowledge that they are a body of picked men, that man for man they are better men than ourselves, they have a higher standard of duty, higher notions of patriotism, higher notions of loyalty to each other, higher notions of organised work and of discipline, and they know how to make a stand for the privileges of which they are in possession. We have no right to complain that they are what they are. If we understood the true dignity of political work, we should rejoice that we are confronted by opponents such as these. We should look upon it as a privilege that we have got to struggle with men of this calibre, and instead of giving ourselves up to despair, we should look upon every failure, as though it was intended by Providence to strengthen us for the next effort we have to make. As regards the vast mass which we have on the other side, of which I have spoken, it is an exceedingly difficult work to energise this vast mass, to put life into it, to make it move along with us, and the work is bound to be slow, and it is being very slowly done.

### *No Cause for Despair*

My point in mentioning these two facts, viz. the forces ranged on one side and the mass lying on the other, is to show to you the tremendously difficult nature of the task that lies before us, the enormous difficulties of the problem which confronts us. I want you to realize these difficulties properly, to consider what has been the extent of your effort to overcome them and the measure of success which has so far attended that effort, and then I feel sure you will

not give yourselves up to despair or indulge in counsels such as those which of late we have been hearing. Remember, gentlemen, that it is only for the last nineteen years that this Congress has been working, and when you think of the work that you are doing — which, after all, is much less than what it might be — and when you think of the results that have so far been achieved, I for one find no cause for despair.

### *Congress Achievements*

What has been achieved during these nineteen years? If you will range your eye over the achievements, you will find that there are some results to our credit which need not be despised at all. Our first agitation was in connection with the raising of the age for the Indian Civil Service. That point we were able to carry and the age was raised from 19 to 23. Our next agitation was for the expansion of Legislative Councils. That reform ultimately came about, and the Legislative Councils are more real and more living deliberative bodies today than they were sixteen or seventeen years ago. They are not yet perfect bodies. There is great room for improvement in their composition and their scope of work. But there is no doubt whatsoever that the general level of debate in these bodies is higher today than it was ever before. The character of the speeches delivered by non-official members in the various provinces shows as a whole a better grasp of public questions and it shows also that the public takes closer and more watchful interest in the legislative and administrative acts of the Government. I think here is a result on which we may well congratulate ourselves. Then, gentlemen, we find that during the last fifteen or twenty years, the Press of the country has become a more potent instrument of progress than was the case before. It is quite true that some of the journals are not up to a very high standard, but, taking one journal with another, they exercise a far greater influence on the progress of the country than was the case before. The resolutions that you pass in your Congress filter down to the mass of our educated people, and they are in one form or another constantly pressed on the attention of the authorities and the people in the columns of the Press. The work of political agitation, which the Congress has undertaken, is thus being carried on day after day, and week after week, by the Press, and this greater activity of the Press you must also put to the credit of the Congress. Again, you find that the different provinces of the country feel now drawn closer together than was the case before; that we throb with the same national impulse, rejoicing over the same achievements and sharing in the same hopes. And here I think is a test of a growing nationality, if ever you had a test. All these things stand to the credit of the Congress. Having achieved these things during the last fifteen or sixteen years with such feeble efforts as we have put forth, I think it is not open to anyone to indulge in language of despair.

### *Increased Difficulties of Political Agitation*

I am not blind to the fact that, to a certain extent, the difficulties of political



agitation have increased of late in this country. On account of the Congress, local political organizations have been overshadowed, on account of the Congress, Imperial questions have cast into the shade Provincial questions. Politicians in different parts of India do not now feel interested to the same extent in local and provincial questions as before. This fact has got to be admitted. Further, the opposition that is offered to us on the other side has become more organized. When the Congress itself did not exist, it was possible for many Englishmen to express a sort of platonic sympathy with our aspirations. Now, however, that they find that we are in earnest and are making organized efforts to realize our aspirations, there are not many who are anxious to associate themselves with us in this work of agitation. Further, our difficulties have increased of late on account of the growth of a spirit of narrow imperialism — not the nobler imperialism which would work for the elevation of all who are included within the Empire, but the narrower imperialism which looks upon the world as though it was made for one race only and which is found in season and out of season of setting up an image of its own achievements and standing in adoration before it. To this imperialism we owe the tendency which has been too much in evidence of late to explain away, and at times even openly to repudiate solemnly given pledges, and it constitutes a phase of the situation which certainly may cause us some anxiety. But after all, these new difficulties come to nothing very much. They only mean that we must redouble our efforts, put more energy and life into our work, and rise equal to the occasion.

*“A Subject Nation can have No Politics”*

There are men who say that nothing is to be gained by our political agitation, that history does not afford us an example of people gaining anything by such methods and that we must, therefore, concentrate our efforts on what they think to be more likely to be achieved, namely, the industrial development of the country. A friend of mine, Mr. Chowdhury, who presided over the last Provincial Conference of Bengal, delivered the other day an address, some parts of which I read with great admiration but other parts of which I failed to comprehend altogether. He laid down the somewhat startling proposition, that a subject race can have no politics. Now this is one of those half truths which are really more dangerous than untruths themselves. If you understand the word “politics” in the sense of international politics, then, of course, the proposition is correct, but if politics is the term wider than international politics, as we know it is, a subject race has as much right and as much reason as, and perhaps more right and more reason, to have politics of its own than the races which are self governing and dominant. You have to fight against the ascendancy of a dominant class, you have to fight to get admittance into those ranks of power which are at present closed to you. All this implies political work of the highest character. Do not, therefore, be misled by propositions of this kind.

In regard to the advice that we should now concentrate our efforts on the

industrial development of the country, while I have the deepest sympathy with all efforts for our industrial advancement, I beg you to remember there are great limits to that kind of work also. It is with me a firm conviction that unless you have a more effective and more potent voice in the government of your own country, in the administration of your own affairs, in the expenditure of your own revenues, it is not possible for you to effect much in the way of industrial development. And I have no doubt in my own mind that those who are asking you today to give up political agitation and confine yourselves to industrial development only will ten years hence be as despondent about the results achieved in the industrial field as they are today about political agitation. I do not mean to say that we should be satisfied with such political work as is being at present done in the country. Far from it; I think no man feels more keenly than myself that things should be as they are. But that only means that we must work more strenuously, not that the work done in the past deserves to be condemned, not that the methods of the past deserve to be discredited and discarded. It is our duty to recognize the demands which the present makes on us, by putting more life and energy into our work. Our public life is really feeble and ineffective because it is so faint-hearted and so soulless. Very few of us have really faith in the work we are doing. When men take up work in a mechanical spirit, without believing in it, you should not be surprised if no great results are achieved.

### *Lessons from Japan*

We all admire and talk of the achievements of Japan. Many of us have of late been reading the history of Japan. I too am trying to follow the story of Japan. What do I find? In the first place there has always been a tremendously strong national feeling in that country. That has been Japan's own. It was not brought into the country by those Western methods which Japan adopted forty years ago. Such national feeling is bound to be a plant of slow growth in this country. In addition to that national feeling, what strikes me most in the history of Japan is the marvellous manner in which the lead of the leaders has been accepted by the bulk of the people of the land. Therein to my mind lies the great secret of Japan's success. Leaders of thought in that country laid down lines of work and the bulk of the people willingly accepted them, and patiently and quietly proceeded to do their part. The result was that there was a great concentration of effort which enabled Japan to cast off, so to say, its ancient dress and to put on new habiliments. This, then, is the lesson we have to learn from Japan, that if our work is to be successful, our efforts must be concentrated, and efforts cannot be concentrated unless leaders receive from followers that disciplined obedience which you find in Japan. It is true that we have not got many single-minded leaders in the country to lead us, but we are not wholly without them. We have one such man in Sir Pherozeshah Mehta;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 115.

earnest and patriotic, possessing high abilities, and qualified in every way to lead the country. But these men must receive more implicit support from the bulk of our educated men. It is a good habit to think for oneself, but where *concentration of efforts is needed, unless questions of conscience are involved*, men must be prepared to subordinate their judgment to that of those whom they are expected to follow. There must be more discipline in our public life. At the same time there must be a greater realization on the part of the leaders of the responsibilities that devolve upon them. The day has gone by when politics could afford to be amateurish in this land. It has been amateurish in the past, but the struggle is growing keener and keener and it is necessary that men should take up the duties and responsibilities of public life in the same manner as they choose their profession and devote their energies to it. For such work we have a right to look to the class from whose ranks the members of our Legislative Councils are drawn. I do not expect every one of these members to give up his daily occupation and to take up this work. But surely in every province, the country has the right to expect at least one or two men to come forward and give more of their time and energy to the building up of the public life, whose weakness we all so much deplore. These men could then be centres round whom our young men could group and band themselves together, and it would then be possible to build up a much higher type of public life than now.

### *No Cause for Discouragement*

I have tried so far to establish two or three propositions. There is nothing whatsoever in the situation to make us despair. Those that indulge in counsels of despair, those that use language such as I have already referred to — who say that nothing is to be gained by political agitation — they really do a great disservice to the country, they do nothing themselves and they only paralyze the efforts of others. It is said that history furnishes no example of a subject people rising by such methods as ours. Now, gentlemen, I have myself paid some attention to history, and if I have been convinced of one thing more than another, it is this: that you can never have a perfect parallel in history. It is impossible for circumstances to repeat themselves, though you have the common saying that history repeats itself. It may be that the history of the world does not furnish an instance where a subject race has risen by agitation. If so, we shall supply that example for the first time. The history of the world has not yet come to an end: there are more chapters to be added, therefore we must not be discouraged by the lessons which some people profess to draw from history.

### *Faith in Work and Sacrifice*

Gentlemen, I do not wish to detain you longer. The great need of the situation is that you should have more faith in the work in which you are engaged and that you should be ready to make more sacrifices for that work. Considering

the manner in which we have been working so far, there is no reason to be dissatisfied with what has been achieved. It is true that, for some time past, the forces of reaction have been gaining in strength. Reactionary legislation against which the whole country had protested has been fixed on the country in spite of the protest. Some recent utterances of men in high authority have been conceived in a spirit calculated to spread a feeling of uneasiness. But all these are passing features of the situation. I am quite confident these things will pass away and in proportion as we put forth greater efforts, in that proportion shall success be achieved by us. Our cause is a cause for which every one of us can do something. Those who have money can give funds; those that have leisure can give time, those that have ability can devote, can contribute to the formation of public opinion on different questions. Young men might come forward to take up the work of missionaries in connection with this cause. There is a great deal of quiet work to be done for which we want young men, who will be willing to take their instructions from their elders, willing to go among the public, without noise or fuss, not anxious to address meetings but willing and content to do quiet work. If we all recognize our respective duties in this spirit, we shall be able to turn our present efforts into a great, rousing movement for the political emancipation of this land. In the presence of such a movement all our petty personal differences will sink, all our squabbles will vanish, our faith will shine radiantly, sacrifices will be made to the extent they are necessary and the country will march onwards, will press onwards to the realization of that destiny of which we should dream by night and on which we should muse by day.

## THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

### *Original Constitution*

*The Servants of India Society was established on 12th June, 1905 when on the hill behind the Fergusson College Poona Gokhale took the vows as given in clause 9 of the Society's constitution and administered them to the first three members, Messrs N A David G K Devadhar and A V Patwardhan A stone tablet on the hill marks the spot where this informal ceremony took place*

*The following is the original draft of the constitution of the Society drafted by Gokhale*

For some time past the conviction has been forcing itself on many earnest and thoughtful minds that a stage has been reached in the political education and advancement of the people, when, for further progress, the devoted labours of a specially trained agency, applying itself to the task in a true missionary spirit, are required. The work that has so far been done has indeed been of the highest value. The growth, during the last fifty years, of a feeling of common nationality, based upon common tradition, common disabilities and common hopes and aspirations, has been most striking. The fact that we are Indians first, and Hindoos, Mahomedans, Parsees or Christians afterwards, is being realized in a steadily increasing measure, and the idea of a united and renovated India, marching onwards to a place among the nations of the world, worthy of her great past, is no longer a mere idle dream of a few imaginative minds, but is the definitely accepted creed of those who form the brain of the community — the educated classes of the country. A creditable beginning has already been made in matters of education and of Local Self-Government, and all classes of the people are slowly but steadily coming under the influence of liberal ideas. The claims of public life are every day receiving wider recognition, and attachment to the land of our birth is growing into a strong and deeply cherished passion of the heart. The annual meetings of the National Congress and of Provincial Conferences, the work of Political Associations, the writings in the columns of the Indian Press — all bear witness to the new life that is coursing in the veins of the people. The results achieved so far are undoubtedly most gratifying, but they only mean that the jungle has been cleared and the foundations laid. The great work of rearing the superstructure has yet to be taken in hand, and the situation demands, on the part of workers, devotion and sacrifices proportionate to the magnitude of the task.

The Servants of India Society has been established to meet in some measure these requirements of the situation. Its members frankly accept the British connection as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-Government on the lines of English Colonies is their goal.

This goal, they recognize, cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient work and sacrifices worthy of the cause. Moreover, the path is beset with great difficulties — there are constant temptations to turn back — bitter disappointments will repeatedly try the faith of those who have put their hand to the work. But the weary toil can have but one end, if only the workers grow not faint-hearted on the way. One essential condition of success is that a sufficient number of our countrymen must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. Public life must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism, which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart, which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence that nothing can shake — equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission, and reverently seek the joy, which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.

The Servants of India Society will train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, for the work of political education and agitation, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interests of the Indian people. Its headquarters will be at Poona, where it will maintain a Home for its members, and, attached to it, a Library for the study of political questions. The following constitution has been adopted for the Society:

1. The Society shall be called "The Servants of India Society."
2. The objects of the Society are to train men for the work of political education and agitation, and to promote by all constitutional means the national interests of the Indian people.
3. The Society will consist of (a) a First Member, (b) Ordinary Members, and (c) Members under training.
4. The First Member will be the Head of the Society and will hold office for life.<sup>1</sup>
5. Every member, on admission, shall be under a vow of absolute obedience to the First Member for five years. During this period, he will be known as a "*Member under training*." <sup>2</sup> When a member has completed his five years' discipline, he will be styled an "Ordinary Member" of the Society.
6. Every member of the Society shall be a member for life.
7. The affairs of the Society will be managed, in accordance with bye-laws framed for the purpose, by the First Member, assisted by a Council of three Ordinary Members, of whom one will be nominated by him and two elected by the Ordinary Members. Every second year, one member of the Council

<sup>1</sup> Mr. G. K. GOKHALE, B. A., C. I. E., is the first "First Member."

<sup>2</sup> The following persons are "Members under training":

NATESH APPAJI DRAVID, M. A.; 2. GOPAL KRISHNA DEVADHAR, M. A. and 3. ANANT VINAYAK PATVARDHAN, B. A.

shall retire by rotation, but he will be eligible for re nomination or re election, as the case may be

8 No person will be admitted as a member of the Society, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation accepted by the First Member

9 Every member, at the time of admission, shall take the following seven vows

(a) That the country will always be the first in his thoughts and he will give to her service the best that is in him

(b) That in serving the country he will seek no personal advantage for himself

(c) That he will regard all Indians as brothers, and will work for the advancement of all, without distinction of caste or creed

(d) That he will be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he has any, as the Society may be able to make in accordance with bye laws framed for the purpose He will devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself

(e) That he will lead a pure personal life

(f) That he will engage in no personal quarrel with any one

(g) That he will always keep in view the aims of the Society and watch over its interests with the utmost zeal, doing all he can to advance its work He will never do anything, which is inconsistent with the objects of the Society

10 Every Member under training will do such work and devote himself to such studies as the First Member may direct The work and the studies will be so arranged that during the five years of special discipline the Member under training may spend about two years in visiting the different parts of India, and the remaining three in prosecuting political studies in the Society's Home at Poona

11 An Ordinary Member, i.e., one who has completed his five years' special discipline, may be sent by the First Member and Council to any part of India on special duty or for general work in connection with the Society He will do the work assigned to him under the general direction of the First Member and Council, and will obey all orders and instructions that he may receive from them

12 Every Ordinary Member shall reside for at least two months every year in the Society's Home at Poona

13 The Society may remove the name of any member from its roll of members on a recommendation to that effect being made by the Council, with the concurrence of three fourths of the members of the Society, and on the recommendation being accepted by the First Member

14 It will be the duty of the First Member to recommend in writing to the Council the names of three Ordinary Members, out of whom the members of the Society shall elect a successor to him as First Member, on a vacancy occurring If no such recommendation has been received by the Council when

the vacancy occurs, the members of the Society may elect any Ordinary Member or in the absence of a suitable Ordinary Member, any member to succeed as First Member.

15. In special circumstances, the First Member may exempt, for reasons to be recorded in writing, any member of the Society from the operation of any rule, save rule No. 9.

16. The Society may admit any person, who is prepared to devote himself for a period of not less than five years to its work, as an Attache of the Society.

17. No person will be admitted as an Attache, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

18. Attaches, during the period of their connection with the Society as Attaches, shall be subject to the same discipline as Members under training, save that they will not be required to live in the Home of the Society.

19. The First Member and Council may grant a subsistence allowance to an Attache of the Society in accordance with bye-laws framed for the purpose.

20. The First Member and Council may remove the name of any Attache from the list of Attaches of the Society. The Society will not be bound to disclose the reasons for such removal.

21. The Society may admit persons, who are in full sympathy with its objects and who are prepared to devote a portion of their time and resources to the furtherance of its work, as Associates of the Society for such period as the First Member and Council may determine.

22. No person will be admitted as an Associate, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

23. Every Associate of the Society will be bound, during the time that he is an Associate, to (a) devote a portion of his time and resources to the furtherance of the Society's work, (b) assist, so far as may be, members of the Society in their work, and (c) abstain from any course of conduct inconsistent with the objects of the Society.

24. The First Member and Council may remove from the list of Associates the name of any person whose conduct they may consider to be prejudicial to the interests of the Society. The Society will not be bound to disclose the reasons for such removal.

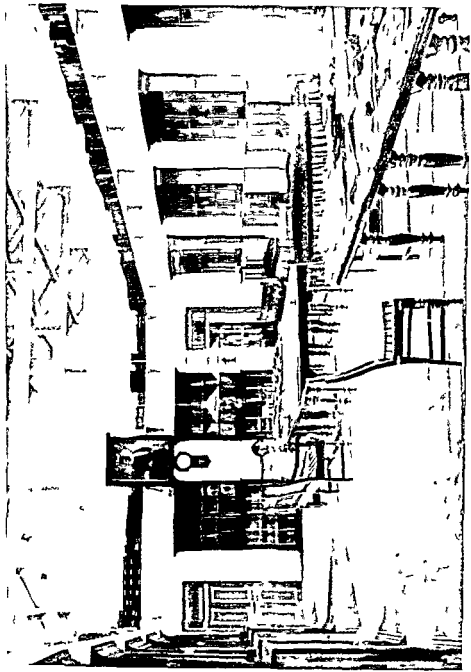
25. Attaches and Associates will have no voice in the management of the affairs of the Society and no interest in the Society's property or funds.

26. All property of the Society shall belong to the Society in its corporate character, and no member, in his individual capacity, nor the heirs, executors or assigns of any member, shall have any right to any portion of it.

27. The property of the Society shall be held by two Trustees, one of whom will be the First Member for the time being, and the other, such member as may be elected by the members of the Society for the purpose.

28. All contracts, entered into for and on behalf of the Society, shall be in the name of the First Member. In all suits, brought by or against the Society,





Reading room of the Servants of India Society's library Poona

the Society shall be represented by the First Member.

29. The Society shall not be dissolved by the death, secession, or removal of any member

30. The First Member may, with the concurrence of a majority of the Ordinary Members of the Society, make, alter or rescind any bye-law or bye-laws for (1) the management of the affairs of the Society and the conduct of its business, (2) the custody, disposal, and control of the funds of the Society, (3) the provision to be made for members of the Society and their families and the grant of special allowances to them in special circumstances, (4) the grant of leave to members of the Society, (5) the grant of subsistence allowance to Attaches of the Society, and (6) the carrying out in other ways of the objects of the Society

31. No alteration shall be made in this constitution, unless it is recommended by the Council, with the concurrence of three-fourths of the members of the Society, and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

32. During the first five years of the Society's existence, there will be no Council, and all powers vested in the First Member and Council, or in the Council only, under this constitution, will be exercised by the First Member, acting singly.

### *Bye-Laws*

The following Bye-laws have been made under Rule 30 (3) :

1 Every Member under training will be granted an allowance of Rs 30 a month for his family, in addition to his personal expenses, which will be borne by the Society, in accordance with a scale to be fixed from time to time by the First Member.

2 Every Ordinary Member will be granted an allowance of Rs 50 a month for himself and family, his personal expenses being borne by him.

3 The life of every member will, on admission, be assured by the Society, in favour of the First Member for the time being, for a sum of Rs 3,000, payable at death. If no Insurance Company accepts the life of any member for assurance, the First Member and Council may make such other arrangement, as they deem fit, to secure, in the case of such member, the object of this bye-law.

4 On the death of a member, whose life has been assured, the First Member shall pay the amount recovered on the life-policy of the deceased to such member or members of his family, as he may, by will or otherwise in writing, have directed. In the absence of such direction, the First Member and Council will have the power to determine whether the amount recovered may be paid to any member or members of the deceased's family, and if so, to whom

5 For every child of a member, the Society will pay him Rs 5 a month, on condition that the money is devoted to securing a policy for the child under the Endowment System of Insurance Companies — the form of Endowment being determined with the approval of the First Member.

the Society shall be represented by the First Member

29 The Society shall not be dissolved by the death, secession, or removal of any member

30 The First Member may, with the concurrence of a majority of the Ordinary Members of the Society, make, alter or rescind any bye law or bye-laws for (1) the management of the affairs of the Society and the conduct of its business, (2) the custody, disposal, and control of the funds of the Society, (3) the provision to be made for members of the Society and their families and the grant of special allowances to them in special circumstances, (4) the grant of leave to members of the Society, (5) the grant of subsistence allowance to Attaches of the Society, and (6) the carrying out in other ways of the objects of the Society

31 No alteration shall be made in this constitution, unless it is recommended by the Council, with the concurrence of three fourths of the members of the Society, and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member

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1 Every Member under training will be granted an allowance of Rs 30 a month for his family, in addition to his personal expenses, which will be borne by the Society, in accordance with a scale to be fixed from time to time by the First Member

2 Every Ordinary Member will be granted an allowance of Rs 50 a month for himself and family, his personal expenses being borne by him. \* ,

3 The life of every member will, on admission, be assured by the Society, in favour of the First Member for the time being for a sum of Rs 3 000, payable at death. If no Insurance Company accepts the life of any member for assurance, the First Member and Council may make such other arrangement, as they deem fit to secure, in the case of such member, the object of this bye-law

4 On the death of a member, whose life has been assured, the First Member shall pay the amount recovered on the life policy of the deceased to such member or members of his family, as he may, by will or otherwise in writing, have directed. In the absence of such direction the First Member and Council will have the power to determine whether the amount recovered may be paid to any member or members of the deceased's family, and if so, to whom

5 For every child of a member, the Society will pay him Rs 5 a month, on condition that the money is devoted to securing a policy for the child under the Endowment System of Insurance Companies—the form of Endowment being determined with the approval of the First Member

6. The Society may pay the school or college fees of the children of its members, provided the selection of the school or college is made with the approval of the *First Member*.

7. The *First Member* and Council will have the power to grant, in special circumstances, a special allowance to a member, suited to the requirements of his case.

8. If a member secedes from the Society, he and his family shall forfeit all claim to the benefits secured to him or them under these bye-laws.

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## CONGRESS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*Gokhale presided over the session of the Indian National Congress held at Banaras in December 1905. He delivered the following inaugural address on the occasion*

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great, the signal honour, which you have conferred upon me by electing me to preside over your deliberations this year. As has been said by more than one of my predecessors the Presidentship of the Congress is the highest distinction, which it is in the power of our countrymen to bestow upon any one, and proud, indeed, is that moment in an Indian's life when he receives at your hands this most conspicuous mark of your confidence and your favour. As I, however, stand before you today, it is not so much the honour of the position, great as that is, as the responsibility which it imposes upon me, that occupies my thoughts. When I was first invited nearly four months ago to accept this office, we were able to see on the horizon only the small cloud — no bigger than a man's hand. Since then the sky has been overcast and for some time a storm has been raging, and it is with rocks ahead and angry waves beating around that I am called upon to take charge of the vessel of the Congress. Even the stoutest heart among us may well own to a feeling of anxiety in such a situation. Let us, however, humbly trust that in this holy city of Benares, the Divine guidance, on which we may securely throw ourselves, will not fail us, and that the united wisdom and patriotism of the delegates assembled will enable the Congress to emerge from the present crisis with unimpaired and even enhanced prestige and usefulness.

### *The Prince and Princess of Wales*

Gentlemen, our first duty today is to offer our most loyal and dutiful welcome to Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales on the occasion of this their first visit to India. The Throne in England is above all parties — beyond all controversies. It is the permanent seat of the majesty, the honour and the beneficence of the British Empire. And in offering our homage to its illustrious occupants and their heirs and representatives, we not only perform a loyal duty, but also express the gratitude of our hearts for all that is noble and high minded in England's connection with India. The late Queen Empress, again, was known, within the limits of her constitutional position to exercise during her reign her vast influence in favour of a policy of justice and sympathy towards the Indian people. We can never forget that the great Proclamation of 1858, on which we take our stand so largely in our constitutional struggle, was not only in spirit but also in substance her own declaration of the principles on which India was to be

governed. The present King-Emperor has announced his resolve to walk in the footsteps of his mother, and we have no doubt that the Prince of Wales is animated by the same desire to see a policy of righteousness pursued towards India. We rejoice that His Royal Highness and his noble consort have come out amongst us to acquaint themselves personally with the ancient civilization of this country and its present condition. The Congress earnestly and respectfully wishes Their Royal Highnesses a most successful tour through India, and it humbly trusts that the knowledge they will acquire and the recollections they will carry back with them will constitute a fresh bond of sympathy and attachment between the Royal Family in England and the Princes and people of this country.

### *The New Viceroy*

The Congress also offers a most cordial and respectful welcome to Their Excellencies Lord<sup>1</sup> and Lady Minto. The new Viceroy assumes the responsibilities of his office at a critical juncture. The temper of the people, so sorely tried during the last three years, calls for the exercise of wise and statesmanlike conciliation on the part of those who are in authority, if further estrangement between the rulers and the ruled is to be prevented. I earnestly trust that such conciliation will be forthcoming. Meanwhile, a special responsibility rests upon us all to see to it that the immediate task that confronts His Excellency is not made more difficult than it already is. The difficulties of the situation are not of Lord Minto's creating, and he has a right to expect the co-operation of both the officials and the public in his endeavours to terminate a state of tension which has already produced deplorable results and which cannot be prolonged without serious detriment to the best interests of the country.

### *Lord Curzon's<sup>2</sup> Administration*

Gentlemen, how true it is that to everything there is an end! Thus even the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon has come to a close! For seven long years all eyes had constantly to turn to one masterful figure in the land—now in admiration, now in astonishment, more often in anger and in pain, till at last it has become difficult to realize that a change has really come. For a parallel to such an administration, we must, I think, go back to the times of Aurangzeb in the history of our own country. There we find the same attempt at a rule excessively centralized and intensely personal, the same strenuous purpose, the same overpowering consciousness of duty, the same marvellous capacity for work, the same sense of loneliness, the same persistence in a policy of distrust and repression, resulting in bitter exasperation all round. I think even the most devoted admirer of Lord Curzon cannot claim that he has strengthened the foundations of British rule in India. In some respects his Lordship will always be recognized as one of the greatest Englishmen that

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 71. <sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.

ever came out to this country His wonderful intellectual gifts, his brilliant powers of expression, his phenomenal energy, his boundless enthusiasm for work — these will ever be a theme of just and unstinted praise But the gods are jealous, and amidst such lavish endowments, they withheld from him a sympathetic imagination, without which no man can ever understand an alien people, and it is a sad truth that at the end of his administration Lord Curzon did not really understand the people of India

This was at the root of his many inconsistencies and made him a perpetual puzzle to most men And thus the man, who professed in all sincerity, before he assumed the reins of office, his great anxiety to show the utmost deference to the feelings and even the prejudices of those over whom he was set to rule, ended by denouncing in unmeasured terms not only the present generation of Indians, but also their remote ancestors and even the ideals of their race which they cherish above everything else, he who, in the early part of his administration, publicly warned the official classes that "official wisdom is not so transcendent as to be superior to the stimulus and guidance of public opinion" and who declared that in the present state of India 'the opinion of the educated classes is one which it is not statesmanship to ignore or to despise,' ended by trampling more systematically upon that opinion than any of his predecessors, and claiming for his own judgment and that of his official colleagues a virtual character of infallibility The fact is that Lord Curzon came to India with certain fixed ideas To him India was a country where the Englishman was to monopolize for all times all power and talk all the while of duty The Indian's only business was to be governed, and it was a sacrilege on his part to have any other aspiration In his scheme of things there was no room for the educated classes of the country, and having failed to amuse them for any length of time by an empty show of taking them into his confidence he proceeded in the end to repress them Even in his last farewell speech at the Byculla Club in Bombay, India exists only as a scene of the Englishman's labours, with the toiling millions of the country — eighty per cent of the population — in the background The remaining twenty per cent, for aught they are worth, might as well be gently swept into the sea<sup>1</sup> Had Lord Curzon been less self-centred, had he had more humility in his nature, he might perhaps have discovered his mistake before it was too late This would probably have enabled him to avoid giving so much offence and causing so much pain as he unhappily did during the last two years, but I doubt if the main current of his administration would even then have flowed in another channel

Lord Curzon's highest ideal of statesmanship is efficiency of administration He does not believe in what Mr Gladstone used to call the principle of liberty as a factor of human progress He has no sympathy with popular aspirations, and when he finds them among a subject people, he thinks he is rendering their country a service by trying to put them down Thus in his Byculla Club speech he actually stated that he had not offered political concessions to the people of India, because he "did not regard it as wisdom or

statesmanship in the interests of India itself to do so!" Taking Lord Curzon at his highest, we find him engaged in a Herculean attempt to strengthen the Englishman's monopoly of power in India and stem the tide of popular agitation and discontent by rousing the members of the bureaucracy to a sense of duty similar to his own and raising the standard of administrative efficiency all round. The attempt has failed, as it was bound to fail. Never was discontent in India more acute and widespread than when the late Viceroy laid down the reins of office; and as regards the bureaucratic monopoly of power, I think we are sensibly nearer the time when it will be successfully assailed.

One claim Lord Curzon advanced in his farewell speech at Bombay, which it is necessary to examine a little. He told his hearers, as he had done once before — on the occasion of the last Budget debate — that even if he had incurred the hostility of educated Indians, the masses would be grateful to him for what he had done for them. This attempt to distinguish between the interests of the educated classes and those of the bulk of their countrymen is a favourite device with those who seek to repress the legitimate aspirations of our people. It is significant that Lord Curzon had never resorted to it till he had finally broken with the educated classes. We know, of course, that the distinction is unreal and ridiculous, and we know also that most of those who use it as a convenient means to disparage the educated classes cannot themselves really believe in it. Lord Curzon mentions the reduction of the salt duty, the writing off of famine arrears, the increased grants to primary education and to irrigation, the attempt at Police reform as measures on which he bases his claim. The suggestion here is that he adopted these measures for the good of the masses in spite of the opposition — at any rate, the indifference — of the educated classes, when the plain fact is that it was the Congress that had been urging these measures year after year on the attention of Government and that it was only after years of persistent agitation that it was able to move the Government in the desired direction. Four years ago, when with a surplus of seven crores or nearly five millions sterling in hand, the Government of India did not remit any taxation, and I ventured to complain<sup>1</sup> of this in the Council and to urge an immediate reduction of the salt duty, I well remember how Lord Curzon sneered at those who "talked glibly" of the burdens of the masses and of the necessity of lowering the salt tax as a measure of relief!

Lord Curzon was fortunate in coming to India when the currency legislation of Lord Lansdowne<sup>1</sup> and Sir David Barbour<sup>2</sup> had succeeded in artificially raising the rupee to its present level, thereby enabling the Government of India to save about four millions sterling a year on its Home remittances. This, with the recovery of the opium revenue, placed huge surpluses at Lord Curzon's disposal throughout his administration and he never knew a moment of that financial stress and anxiety which his predecessors had to face for a

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 151. <sup>2</sup> Finance Member, Government of India (1888-93).



series of years. Considering how large these surpluses have been, I do not think the relief given by Lord Curzon to the taxpayers of the country has by any means been liberal. He himself estimated last March the total amount of this relief at 7 millions sterling. He did not mention that during the same time he had taken from the taxpayers 33 millions sterling over and above the requirements of the Government. Again, how paltry is the relief given by the reduction of the salt duty and the writing off of famine arrears compared with the enormous injury done to the mass of our people by the artificial raising of the value of the rupee, which led to heavy and immediate depreciation of their small savings in silver, and which makes a grievous addition to their permanent burdens by indirectly enhancing their assessments and increasing their debts to the money lender as prices adjust themselves to the new rupee.

Much has been made of Lord Curzon's increased grants to primary education. Considering how little the State does in India for the education of the masses it would have been astonishing, if with such surpluses Lord Curzon had not made any addition to the educational expenditure of the country. But if he has given a quarter of a million more to education, he has given five millions a year more to the Army, and with reckless profusion he has increased the salaries of European officials in many departments and has created several new posts for them. "A spirit of expenditure," to use an expression of Mr Gladstone's, has been abroad in all directions during his time, and he has never practised the old fashioned virtue of economy, with which the real interests of the people are bound up. Of course a ruler cannot labour as devotedly as Lord Curzon has done for seven years for increased efficiency without removing or mitigating important administrative evils, but that is quite different from a claim of championing the special interests of the masses as against their natural leaders and spokesmen, the educated classes of the community.

### *Partition of Bengal*

Gentlemen, the question that is uppermost in the minds of us all at this moment is the Partition of Bengal. A cruel wrong has been inflicted on our Bengalee brethren and the whole country has been stirred to its deepest depths with sorrow and resentment, as has never been the case before. The scheme of partition, concocted in the dark and carried out in the face of the fiercest opposition that any Government measure has encountered during the last half a century, will always stand as a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule — its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people, the mockery an appeal to its sense of justice becomes and its cool preference of Service interests to those of the governed. Lord Curzon and his advisers — if he ever had any advisers — could never allege that they had no means of judging of the depth of public feeling in the matter. All that could possibly have been done by way of a respect-

ful representation of the views of the people had been done. As soon as it was known that a partition of some sort was contemplated, meeting after meeting of protest was held, till over five hundred public meetings in all parts of the Province had proclaimed in no uncertain voice that the attempt to dismember a compact and homogeneous province, to which the people were passionately attached and of which they were justly proud, was deeply resented and would be resisted to the uttermost. Memorials to the same effect poured in upon the Viceroy. The Secretary of State for India was implored to withhold his sanction to the proposed measure. The intervention of the British House of Commons was sought, first, by a monster petition, signed by sixty thousand people, and later by means of a debate on the subject raised in the House by our ever watchful friend — Mr. Herbert Roberts.<sup>1</sup> All proved unavailing. The Viceroy had made up his mind. The officials under him had expressed approval. What business had the people to have an opinion of their own and to stand in the way? To add insult to injury, Lord Curzon described the opposition to his measure as ‘manufactured’ — the opposition in which all classes of Indians, high and low, uneducated and educated, Hindus and Mahomedans, had joined, the opposition than which nothing more intense, nothing more widespread, nothing more spontaneous, had been seen in this country in the whole course of our political agitation! Let it be remembered that when the late Viceroy cast this stigma on those who were ranged against his proposals, not a single public pronouncement in favour of those proposals had been made by any section of the community; and that among the foremost opponents of the measure were men like Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore and Sir Gurudas Bannerji, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerji and Dr. Rash Behary Ghose, the Maharajas of Mymensingh and Kassimbazaar — men who keep themselves aloof from ordinary political agitation and never say a word calculated in any way to embarrass the authorities, and who came forward to oppose publicly the Partition project only from an overpowering sense of the necessity of their doing what they could to avert a dreaded calamity. If the opinions of even such men are to be brushed aside with contempt, if all Indians are to be treated as no better than dumb-driven cattle; if men, whom any other country would delight to honour, are to be thus made to realize the utter humiliation and helplessness of their position in their own, then all I can say is “Good-bye to all hope of co-operating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interests of the people!” I can conceive of no graver indictment of British rule than that such a state of things should be possible after a hundred years of that rule!

#### *A Possible Alternative*

Gentlemen, I have carefully gone through all the papers which have been published by the Government on this subject of Partition. Three things have

<sup>1</sup> SIR JOHN HERBERT ROBERTS, BART., LORD CLWYD (1863-1920) member, British House of Commons (1892-1918); president, Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, London; took keen interest in Indian affairs.

struck me forcibly — a determination to dismember Bengal at all costs, an anxiety to promote the interests of Assam at the expense of Bengal, and a desire to suit everything to the interests and convenience of the Civil Service. It is not merely that a number of new prizes have been thrown into the lap of that Service — one Lieutenant Governorship, two Memberships of the Board of Revenue, one Commissionership of a Division, several Secretaryships and Under-Secretaryships — but alternative schemes of readjustment have been rejected on the express ground that their adoption would be unpopular with the members of the Service. Thus, even if a reduction of the charge of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal had really become inevitable — a contention which the greatest living authority on the subject, Sir Henry Cotton,<sup>1</sup> who was Secretary to the Bengal Government under seven Lieutenant Governors does not admit — one would have thought that the most natural course to take was to separate Behar, Orissa and Chota Nagpore from Bengal and form them into a separate province. This would have made the Western Province one of 30 millions in place of the Eastern. But this, says the Government of India, "would take from Bengal all its best districts and would make the Province universally unpopular." This was of course a fatal objection, for, compared with the displeasure of the Civil Service, the trampling under foot of public opinion and the outraging of the deepest feelings of a whole people was a small matter.<sup>1</sup> But one can see that administrative considerations were really only secondary in the determination of this question.

The dismemberment of Bengal had become necessary, because, in the view of the Government of India, "it cannot be for the lasting good of any country or any people that public opinion or what passes for it should be manufactured by a comparatively small number of people at a single centre and should be disseminated thence for universal adoption, all other views being discouraged or suppressed." "From every point of view," the Government further states, "it appears to us desirable to encourage the growth of centres of independent opinion, local aspirations, local ideals and to preserve the growing intelligence and enterprise of Bengal from being cramped and stunted by the process of forcing it prematurely into a mould of rigid and sterile uniformity." You will see that this is only a paraphrase, in Lord Curzon's most approved style, of the complaint of the people of Bengal that their fair Province has been dismembered to destroy their growing solidarity, check their national aspirations and weaken their power of co-operating for national ends, lessen the influence of their educated classes with their countrymen and reduce the political importance of Calcutta. After this let no apologist of the late Viceroy pretend that the object of the partition was administrative convenience and not political repression.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SIR HENRY JOHN STEDMAN COTTON I.C.S. entered Bengal Civil Service (1867) Secretary Revenue Department Bengal Government (1888) Secretary, Finance Department (1889) Chief Secretary (1891-96) Chief Commissioner, Assam (1896-1902) President Indian National Congress (1904) member British House of Commons (1906-10) Author of *New India or India in Transition*

Gentlemen, it is difficult to speak in terms of due restraint of Lord Curzon's conduct throughout this affair. Having published his earlier and smaller scheme for public criticism, it was his clear duty to publish similarly the later and larger scheme which he afterwards substituted for it. But in consequence of the opposition which the first scheme encountered, he abandoned the idea of taking the public any more into his confidence and proceeded to work in the matter in the dark. For more than a year nothing further was heard of his intentions, and while he was silently elaborating the details of his measure, he allowed the impression to prevail that the Government had abandoned the partition project. And in the end, when he had succeeded in securing the Secretary of State's sanction to the scheme, it was from Simla, where he and his official colleagues were beyond the reach of public opinion, that he sprang the final orders of Government upon an unprepared people. Then suddenly came his resignation. And the people permitted themselves for a while to hope that it would bring them at least a brief respite, especially as Mr. Brodrick<sup>1</sup> had promised shortly before to present further papers on the subject to Parliament, which was understood to mean that the scheme would not be brought into operation till Parliament reassembled at the beginning of next year. Of course, after his resignation, the only proper, the only dignified, course for Lord Curzon was to take no step which it was difficult to revoke and the consequences of which would have to be faced not by him, but by his successor. He owed it to Lord Minto to give him an opportunity to examine the question for himself; he owed it to the Royal visitors not to plunge the largest Province of India into violent agitation and grief on the eve of their visit to it. But Lord Curzon was determined to partition Bengal before he left India, and so he rushed the necessary legislation through the Legislative Council at Simla, which only the official members could attend, and enforced his orders on 16th October last — a day observed as one of universal mourning by all classes of people in Bengal. And now, while he himself has gone from India, what-a sea of troubles he has bequeathed to his successor! Fortunately, there are grounds to believe that Lord Minto will deal with the situation with tact, firmness, and sympathy, and it seems he has already pulled up to some extent Lord Curzon's favourite Lieutenant, the first ruler of the new Eastern Province. Mr. Fuller has evidently cast to the winds all prudence, all restraint, all sense of responsibility. Even if a fraction of what the papers have been reporting be true, his extraordinary doings must receive the attention of the new Secretary of State for India and the House of Commons. There is no surer method of goading a docile people into a state of dangerous despair than the kind of hectoring and repression he has been attempting.

But, gentlemen, as has been well said, even in things evil there is a soul of goodness, and the dark times through which Bengal has passed and is passing, have not been without a message of bright hope for the future. The tremendous

<sup>1</sup> Secretary of State for India (1903-05),

upheaval of popular feeling, which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our national progress. For the first time since British rule began, all sections of the Indian community, without distinction of caste or creed, have been moved, by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure, to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong. A wave of true national consciousness has swept over the Province and, at its touch, old barriers have, for the time at any rate, been thrown down, personal jealousies have vanished, other controversies have been hushed. Bengal's heroic stand against the oppression of a harsh and uncontrolled bureaucracy has astonished and gratified all India, and her sufferings have not been endured in vain, when they have helped to draw closer all parts of the country in sympathy and in aspiration. A great rush and uprising of the waters such as has been recently witnessed in Bengal cannot take place without a little inundation over the banks here and there. Those little excesses are inevitable when large masses of men move spontaneously—especially when the movement is from darkness into light, from bondage towards freedom—and they must not be allowed to disconcert us too much. The most astounding fact of the situation is that the public life of this country has received an accession of strength of great importance, and for this all India owes a deep debt of gratitude to Bengal. Of course the difficulties which confront the leaders of Bengal are enormous and perhaps they have only just begun. But I know there is no disposition to shrink from any responsibilities, and I have no doubt that whatever sacrifices are necessary will be cheerfully made. All India is at their back, and they will receive in the work that lies before them the cordial sympathy and assistance of the other Provinces. Any discredit that is allowed to fall on them affects us all. They on their side must not forget that the honour of all India is at present in their keeping.

### *The Swadeshi Movement*

Gentlemen, I will now say a few words on a movement which has spread so rapidly and has been hailed with so much enthusiasm all over the country during the last few months—the Swadeshi movement. It is necessary, at the outset, to distinguish it from another movement started in Bengal, which has really given it such immense impetus—the boycott of British goods. We all know that when our Bengalee brethren found that nothing would turn the late Viceroy from his purpose of partitioning Bengal, that all their protests in the Press and on the platform, all their memorials to him, to the Secretary of State and to Parliament were unavailing, that the Government exercised its despotic strength to trample on their most cherished feelings and to injure their dearest interests and that no protection against this of any kind was forthcoming from any quarter, they, in their extremity, resolved to have recourse to this boycott movement. This they did with a twofold object—first, as a demonstration of their deep resentment at the treatment they were receiving, and, secondly, to attract the attention of the people in England to their grie-

vances, so that those who were in a position to call the Government of India to account might understand what was taking place in India. It was thus as a political weapon, used for a definite political purpose, that they had recourse to the boycott; and in the circumstances of their position they had every justification for the step they took. And I can tell you from personal experience that their action has proved immensely effective in drawing the attention of English people to the state of things in our country. But a weapon like this must be reserved only for extreme occasions. There are obvious risks involved in its failure and it cannot be used with sufficient effectiveness, unless there is an extraordinary upheaval of popular feeling behind it. It is bound to rouse angry passions on the other side, and no true well-wisher of his country will be responsible for provoking such passions, except under an overpowering sense of necessity. On an extreme occasion, of course, a boycotting demonstration is perfectly legitimate but that occasion must be one to drive all the classes, as in Bengal, to act with one impulse, and make all leaders sink their personal differences in the presence of a common danger. It is well to remember that the term 'boycott', owing to its origin, has got unsavoury associations, and it conveys to the mind before everything else a vindictive desire to injure another. Such a desire on our part, as a normal feature of our relations with England, is, of course, out of the question. Moreover, if the boycott is confined to British goods only, it leaves us free to purchase the goods of other foreign countries, and this does not help the Swadeshi movement in any way.

Gentlemen, the true Swadeshi movement is both a patriotic and an economic movement. The idea of Swadeshi or 'one's own country' is one of the noblest conceptions that have ever stirred the heart of humanity. As the poet asks :

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said, —

This is my own, my native land !

The devotion to motherland, which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs today above everything else that the gospel of this devotion should be preached to high and low, to prince and to peasant, in town and in hamlet, till the service of motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan. The Swadeshi movement, as it is ordinarily understood, presents one part of this gospel to the mass of our people in a form which brings it within their comprehension. It turns their thoughts to their country, accustoms them to the idea of voluntarily making some sacrifice for her sake, enables them to take an intelligent interest in her economic development and teaches them the important lesson of co-operating with one another for a national end. All this is most valuable work and those who undertake it are entitled to feel that they are engaged in a highly patriotic mission. But the movement on its material side is an economic one; and though self-denying ordinances, extensively entered into, must serve a valuable economic purpose, namely, to ensure a ready consumption of such

articles as are produced in the country and to furnish a perpetual stimulus to production by keeping the demand for indigenous things largely in excess of the supply, the difficulties that surround the question economically are so great that they require the co-operation of every available agency to surmount them. The problem is, indeed, one of the first magnitude. Twelve years ago, the late Mr. Ranade<sup>1</sup> remarked at an Industrial Conference held at Poona

The political domination of one country by another attracts far more attention than the more formidable, though unfelt domination, which the capital, enterprise and skill of one country exercise over the trade and manufactures of another. This latter domination has an insidious influence which paralyzes the springs of all the varied activities, which together make up the life of a nation.

The question of production is a question of capital, enterprise and skill, and in all these factors our deficiency at present is very great. Whoever can help in any one of these fields is, therefore, a worker in the Swadeshi cause and should be welcomed as such. Not by methods of exclusion but by those of *comprehension, not by insisting on every one working in the same part of the field* but by leaving each one free to select his own corner, by attracting to the cause all who are likely to help and not alienating any who are already with us, are the difficulties of the problem likely to be overcome. Above all, let us see to it that there are no fresh divisions in the country in the name of Swadeshim. No greater perversion of its true spirit could be imagined than that.

Take the question of cotton piece goods, of which we import at present over 22 millions sterling worth a year. This is by far the heaviest item among our imports and our present Swadeshi agitation is directed mainly towards producing as much of these goods in our own country as possible. I have consulted three of the best experts available in India on this subject—Mr. Bezanji of Nagpore, the right-hand man of the late Mr. Tata in mill matters, the Hon. Mr. Vithaldas Damodardas,<sup>2</sup> who has written an admirable paper on the Cotton Industry for the Industrial Conference and has kindly placed a copy of it at my disposal, and our friend Mr. Wacha.<sup>3</sup> They are all agreed about the requirements and the difficulties of the situation. So far as the cotton fabrics are concerned, even strict Free Traders should have nothing to say

<sup>1</sup> MAHADEO GOVIND RANADE (1842-1901), father of Indian economics, editor, *Indu Prakash* (1862), Oriental Translator, Bombay Government (1866-67), Administrator, Akalkot State, judge Kolhapur State, professor of English, Elphinstone College, Bombay (1868-71), Police Magistrate Bombay, judge, Small Cause Court, Bombay, First Class First Grade sub-judge, Nasik, Dhulia and Poona, judge Small Cause Court, Poona (1871), Presidency Magistrate Bombay (1881), special sub-judge under the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act (1879), judge, Bombay High Court (1893-1901), member, Finance Committee appointed by the Government of India (1886), Law Member, Bombay Legislative Council (1885, 1890 and 1893), founder, National Congress and Social Conference, Author of *Rise of the Maratha Power*, *Indian Economics*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p 91

<sup>3</sup> See foot note on p 150.

against the encouragement which the Swadeshi movement seeks to give to their manufacture in India. In the first place, many of the usual objections that may be urged against a system of State protection do not apply to helpful voluntary action on the part of consumers, such as the Swadeshi movement endeavours to promote. Moreover, the essence of Free Trade is that a commodity should be produced where the comparative cost of its production is the least and that it should be consumed where its relative value is the highest; and if accidental circumstances have thwarted such an adjustment in a given case, any agency which seeks to overcome the impediment works in the end in the interests of true Free Trade. Now everyone will admit that with cheap labour and cotton at her own door, India enjoys exceptional advantages for the manufacture of cotton goods; and if the Swadeshi movement helps her to regain her natural position in this respect — a position which she once occupied but out of which she has been driven by an extraordinary combination of circumstances — the movement works not against but in furtherance of true Free Trade. Even at present the cotton industry in India is an important one. It is the largest industry after agriculture in the country; it is also one — agriculture excepted — in which the Indians themselves have a substantial share. It is represented by a paid-up capital of about 17 crores of rupees or a little over 11 millions sterling, the number of mills being about 200, with five million spindles and fifty thousand power-looms. In addition to this, there are, according to the census of 1901, about a quarter of a million persons engaged in hand-loom weaving in the country. Our mills consume nearly 60 per cent. of the cotton produce of India, and produce 58 crore lbs. of yarn. Of this quantity, Mr. Vithaldas tells us, about  $23\frac{1}{2}$  crore lbs. is exported to China and other foreign countries, about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  crore lbs. is used in our weaving mills and about 19 crore lbs. is woven by hand-loom weavers, the remaining 2 crore lbs. going to the manufacture of rope and twine. In addition to this, 3 crore lbs. of yarn is imported from the United Kingdom, and is consumed by the hand-looms. The hand-loom industry of the country thus absorbs, in spite of its hard struggles, about 22 crore lbs. of yarn, or nearly double the quantity woven by power-looms, and this is a most interesting and significant fact. *The yarn used by the weaving mills produces about 55 crores of yards of cloth, of which about 14 crore yards is exported to foreign countries and about 41 crores is left for consumption in the country. If we put down the production of the hand-looms at about 90 crore yards, we have about 130 crore yards as the quantity of Swadeshi cloth consumed at present in India.*

The quantity of piece-goods imported from the United Kingdom and retained for use in the country is about 205 crore yards a year. Of the total cloth consumed, therefore, over one-third is at present Swadeshi. This is an encouraging feature of the situation. But the imported cloth is almost all superior in quality.

"While our mills," Mr. Vithaldas says, "produce the coarser cloth, say, from yarn up to 30's count and in a few cases up to 40's, the bulk of the



imported cloth is of the finer quality, using yarn over 30's count. The Indian weaving mills are obliged to restrict themselves for the most part to weaving coarser cloth owing to the inferior quality of cotton now grown in the country."

It may be noted that even from existing cotton, hand-looms can, owing to their greater delicacy of handling the yarn, produce finer cloth than the power-looms. Fortunately, owing to the exertions of the Agricultural Department of the Bombay Government — exertions for which it is entitled to the best thanks of the whole country — Egyptian cotton has just been successfully introduced into Sind and this year a thousand bales of a quality equal to very good Egyptian have been produced. A much heavier crop is expected next year and there is no doubt that its cultivation will rapidly extend. The main difficulty in the way of our manufacturing the quality of cloth that is at present imported is one of capital. Mr. Wacha estimates that if the whole quantity of 205 crore yards is to be produced by mills, the industry requires an additional capital of about 30 crores of rupees. Even if we proposed to spread this over ten years, we should require an addition of 3 crores of rupees every year. Now if we turn to the Statistical Abstract of British India, we shall find that the total increase in the capital invested in cotton mills during the last ten years has been only about 3 crores for ten years, an amount that Mr. Wacha wants every year. The normal development of the mill industry is thus plainly unequal to the requirements of the situation. Moreover, it is well to remember what Mr. Bezant says that the present mill owners must not be expected to be very keen about the production of finer cloth, because its manufacture is much less paying than that of the coarser cloth. This is due to various causes, the principal one among them being that English capital, similarly invested, is satisfied with a smaller range of profits. Capital from other quarters must, therefore, be induced to come forward and undertake this business. If we again turn to the Statistical Abstract, we shall find that our people hold about 50 crores of rupees in Government Securities and about 11 crores in Postal Savings Banks. The private deposits stand at about 33 crores of rupees, but there are no means of ascertaining how much of the amount is held by Indians. Considering the extent of the country and the number of the population, these resources are, of course, extremely meagre. Still they might furnish some part of the capital needed. In this connection may I say that a special responsibility now rests in the matter on the aristocracy of Bengal? And this is not merely because the Swadeshi movement is being so vigorously advocated in their Province, but also because, owing to the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, they are enabled to enjoy resources, which, in other parts of India, are swept into the coffers of the State. If sufficient capital is forthcoming, Mr. Bezant's patriotism may, I am sure, be relied on to secure for the undertaking whatever assistance his great capacity and unrivalled knowledge can give.

It must, however, be admitted that capital will come forward only cautiously for this branch of the business. But the hand looms are likely to prove of

greater immediate service. Mr. Vithaldas looks forward to a great revival of the hand-loom industry in the country, and I cannot do better than quote what he says on this point in his paper :

"The village industry," he says, "gives means of livelihood not only to an immense number of the weaver class, but affords means of supplementing their income to agriculturists — the backbone of India — who usually employ themselves on hand-loom when field work is unnecessary, and also when, owing to famine, drought or excessive rains, agricultural operations are not possible. Now the apparatus with which they work is nearly two centuries behind the times. Mr. Havell, Principal of the Calcutta School of Arts, Mr. Chatterton of the Madras School of Arts, and Mr. Churchill of Bangalore, along with many others, are doing yeoman's service by taking keen interest in the question of supplying economical and improved apparatus to the hand-loom weavers. Mr. Havell has pointed out that in preparing the work our hand-loom weavers are incapable of winding more than two threads at a time, though the simplest mechanical device would enable them to treat 50 or 100 threads simultaneously. The latest European hand-loom which successfully competes with the power-loom in Cairo and in many places in Europe, can turn out a maximum of 68 yards of common cloth in a day. Mr. Havell is satisfied that the greater portion of the imported cotton cloth can be made in the Indian hand-loom with great profit to the whole community. The question of the immediate revival of the hand-loom weaving industry on a commercial basis demands the most earnest attention of every well-wisher of India and evidence gives promise of a successful issue to efforts put forward in this direction."

The outlook here is thus hopeful and cheering; only we must not fail to realize that the co-operation of all who can help — including the Government — is needed to overcome the difficulties that lie in the path.

### *Our Aims and Aspirations*

Gentlemen, this is the twenty-first session of the Indian National Congress. Year after year, since 1885, we have been assembling in these gatherings to give voice to our aspirations and to formulate our wants. When the movement was first inaugurated, we were under the influence of that remarkable outburst of enthusiasm for British rule, which had been evoked in the country by the great Viceroyalty of the Marquis of Ripon.<sup>1</sup> The best beloved of India's Viceroys was not content to offer mere lip-homage to the principle that righteousness alone exalteth a nation. He had dared to act on it in practice and he had braved persecution at the hands of his own countrymen in India for its sake. Lord Ripon's noblest service to this country was that he greatly quickened the processes by which the consciousness of a national purpose comes

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.

to establish itself in the minds of a people. The Congress movement was the direct and immediate outcome of this realization. It was started to focus and organize the patriotic forces that were working independently of one another in different parts of the country so as to invest their work with a national character and to increase their general effectiveness. Hope at that time was warm and faith shone bright, largely as a result of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty, and those who started the Congress believed that, by offering their criticism and urging their demands from a national platform where they could speak in the name of all India, they would be able to secure a continuous improvement of the administration and a steady advance in the direction of the political emancipation of the people. Twenty years have since elapsed, and during the time much has happened to chill that hope and dim that faith, but there can be no doubt that work of great value in our national life has already been accomplished. The minds of the people have been familiarized with the idea of a united India working for her salvation, a national public opinion has been created, close bonds of sympathy now knit together the different Provinces, caste and creed separations hamper less and less the pursuit of common aims, the dignity of a consciousness of national existence has spread over the whole land. Our record of political concessions won is, no doubt, very meagre, but those that have been secured are of considerable value, some retrogression has been prevented, and if latterly we have been unable to stem the tide of reaction, the resistance we have offered, though it has failed of its avowed purpose, has substantially strengthened our public life. Our deliberations have extended over a very wide range of problems, public opinion in the country is, in consequence, better informed, and the Press is steadily growing in authority and usefulness. Above all, there is a general perception now of the goal towards which we have to strive and a wide recognition of the arduous character of the struggle and the immense sacrifices it requires.

The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that, in course of time, a form of Government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the Self Governing Colonies of the British Empire. For better, for worse, our destinies are now linked with those of England, and the Congress freely recognises that what ever advance we seek must be within the Empire itself. That advance, moreover, can only be gradual, as at each stage of the progress it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship before we are enabled to go to the next one, for it is a reasonable proposition that the sense of responsibility, required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West, can be acquired by an Eastern people through practical training and experience only. To admit this is not to express any agreement with those who usually oppose all attempts at reform on the plea that the people are not ready for it.

"It is liberty alone," says Mr Gladstone in words of profound wisdom, "which fits men for liberty. This proposition, like every other in politics,

has its bounds; but it is far safer than the counter doctrine, wait till they are fit."

While, therefore, we are prepared to allow that an advance towards our goal may be only by reasonably cautious steps, what we emphatically insist on is that the resources of the country should be primarily devoted to the work of qualifying the people by means of education and in other ways for such advance. Even the most bigoted champion of the existing system of administration will not pretend that this is in any degree the case at present.

Our net revenue is about 44 millions sterling. Of this very nearly one-half is now eaten up by the Army. The Home Charges, exclusive of their military portion, absorb nearly one-third. The two, between them, account for about 34 millions out of 44. Then over 3 millions are paid to European officials in civil employ. This leaves only about 7 millions at the disposal of the Government to be applied to other purposes. Can any one, who realises what this means, wonder that the Government spends only a miserable three-quarters of a million out of State funds on the education of the people — primary, secondary and higher, all put together ! Japan came under the influence of Western ideas only forty years ago, and yet already she is in a line with the most advanced nations of the West in matters of mass education, the State finding funds for the education of every child of school-going age. We have now been a hundred years under England's rule, and yet today four villages out of every five are without a school-house and seven children out of eight are allowed to grow up in ignorance and in darkness ! Militarism, Service interests and the interests of English capitalists — all take precedence today of the true interests of the Indian people in the administration of the country. Things cannot be otherwise, for it is the government of the people of one country by the people of another and this, as Mill points out, is bound to produce great evils.

Now the Congress wants that all this should be governed, first and foremost, in the interests of the Indians themselves. This result will be achieved only in proportion as we obtain more and more voice in the government of our country. We are prepared to bear — and bear cheerfully — our fair share of the burdens of the Empire, of which we are now a part, but we want to participate in the privileges also, and we object most strongly to being sacrificed, as at present, in order that others may prosper. Then the Congress asks for a redemption of those promises for the equal treatment of Indians and Englishmen in the government of this country, which have been so solemnly given us by the *Sovereign and the Parliament of England*. It is now three-quarters of a century since the Parliament passed an Act, which, the Court of Directors pointed out, meant that there was to be no governing caste in India. The governing caste, however, is still as vigorous, as exclusive as ever. Twenty-five years later the late Queen-Empress addressed a most memorable Proclamation to the princes and people of India. The circumstances connected with the issue of that Proclamation and its noble contents will always bear witness to the true greatness of that great Sovereign and will never cease to shed lustre on the

English name The Proclamation repeats the pledges contained in the Charter Act of 1833, and though an *astounding attempt* was made less than two years ago by the late Viceroy to explain away its solemn import, the plain meaning of the royal message cannot be altered without attributing what is nothing less than an unworthy subterfuge to a Sovereign, the deep reverence for whose memory is an asset of the Empire

That the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 have created in the eyes of reactionary rulers a most inconvenient situation is clear from a blunt declaration which another Viceroy of India, the late Lord Lytton<sup>1</sup> made in a confidential document and which has since seen the light of day Speaking of our claims and expectations based on the pledges of the Sovereign and the Parliament of England, he wrote

We all know that these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled We have had to choose between prohibiting them (the natives of India) and cheating them and we have chosen the least straightforward course Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the Government of England and of India appear to me up to the present moment unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear

We accept Lord Lytton as an unimpeachable authority on the conduct of the Government in evading the fulfilment of the pledges We deny his claim to lay down that our "claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled"

Our whole future, it is needless to say, is bound up with this question of the relative position of the two races in this country The domination of one race over another — especially when there is no great disparity between their intellectual endowments and their general civilization — inflicts great injury on the subject race in a thousand insidious ways On the moral side, the present situation is steadily destroying our capacity for initiative and dwarfing us as men of action On the material side, it has resulted in a fearful impoverishment of the people For a hundred years and more now India has been for members of the dominant race a country where fortunes were to be made to be taken out and spent elsewhere As in Ireland the evil of absent landlordism has in the past aggravated the racial domination of the English over the Irish, so in India what may be called absentee capitalism has been added to the racial ascendancy of Englishmen A great and ruinous drain of wealth from the country has gone on for many years the net excess of exports over imports (including treasure) during the last forty years amounting to no less than a thousand millions sterling The steady rise in the death rate of the country — from 24 per thousand, the average for 1882-84 to 30 per thousand the average for 1892-94, and 34 per thousand the present average — is a terrible and conclusive proof of this continuous impoverishment of the mass of our people

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 59

India's best interests — material and moral — no less than the honour of England, demand that the policy of equality for the two races promised by the Sovereign and by Parliament should be faithfully and courageously carried out.

### *The Bureaucracy*

Gentlemen, as I have already observed, the manner in which the Partition of Bengal has been carried out furnishes a striking illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule. Happily these features are not always so conspicuously in evidence. No one also denies that a large proportion of the members of the bureaucracy bring to their work a high level of ability, a keen sense of duty and a conscientious desire, within the limits of the restricted opportunities permitted by the predominance of other interests, to do what good they can to the people. It is the system that is really at fault — a system which relegates the interest of the people to a very subordinate place and which, by putting too much power into the hands of these men, impairs their sense of responsibility and develops in them a spirit of intolerance of criticism. I know many of these men are on their side constantly smarting under a sense of unfair condemnation by our countrymen. They fail to realize that if the criticism that is passed on their actions is sometimes ill-informed and even unjust, this is largely due to the veil of secrecy which carefully hides official proceedings from the view of the people in India. Moreover, theirs are at present all the privileges of the position and they must bear without impatience or bitterness its few disadvantages. I have already said that our advance towards our goal can only be gradual. Meanwhile, there is a great deal of work to be done for the country in which officials and non-officials could join hands. A considerable part of the way we could both go together, but it can only be on terms consistent with the self-respect of either side. In old times, when British rule was new and its higher standards and its more vigorous purposes excited general admiration, the Englishman's claim to a privileged position, even outside the sphere of official duties, was allowed to pass unchallenged. That is now no longer possible, and those officials, who expect the Indians to approach them with bated breath and whispering humbleness — and the type is not confined to the new Eastern Province exclusively — not only make useful relations between the two sides impossible, but do more harm to their own class than they imagine. In one respect, the gulf between the official and educated classes of the country is bound to widen more and more every day. The latter now clearly see that the bureaucracy is growing frankly selfish and openly hostile to their national aspirations. It was not so in the past.

In a most remarkable letter which I had the honour to receive, while in England two months ago, from Mr. Hodgson Pratt — a great and venerated name among all lovers of peace — he tells us with what object Western education was introduced into this country.

" Fifty years ago," writes Mr Pratt, who in those days was a member of the Bengal Civil Service, " while India was still under the Government of the East India Company, it was considered both just and wise to introduce measures for national education on a liberal scale, with adequate provision of schools, colleges, and universities. This event was hailed with lively satisfaction by the native population as heralding a new era of social progress, and as satisfying the active intelligence of the Hindus. Now it must be observed that the character of the teaching thus inaugurated by Englishmen would necessarily reflect the ideals which have for centuries prevailed among them. In other words Indian youths would be brought up to admire our doctrines of political liberty, popular rights, and national independence, nor could it ever have been supposed that these lessons would fall upon deaf ears and cold hearts. On the contrary, the inevitable result of such teaching was clearly perceived by the Government of those days, and was regarded in a generous spirit. In support of this assertion I may mention that at the time of the inauguration of these measures I accompanied the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal ( Sir Frederick Halliday ) on one of his winter tours through the province. Naturally, he called the attention of those who attended the public meetings held by him to the new education policy, and he always took occasion to declare that the schools would promote one of the leading purposes of British rule, *which was to prepare the people for self-government*. It certainly was not supposed that at any subsequent time a policy would be adopted, which would disappoint the legitimate hopes thus created "

Now, however, that the time has come for the bureaucracy to part with some of its power in favour of the educated classes, all kinds of excuses are brought forward to postpone what is no doubt regarded as the evil day.

One favourite argument is that the educated classes are as yet only a very small fraction of the community. The hollowness of this plea was well exposed by the late Mr. George Yule in his address as President of our National Congress in 1888. Quoting Prof Thorold Rogers, he pointed out that a hundred years ago, not one man in ten or one woman in twenty knew how to read and write in England. Going another century or two back, he added, the people of England, man and boy, high and low, with the exception of a mere handful, were steeped in the grossest ignorance, and yet there was a House of Commons. We have now in this country about 15 million people who can read and write, and about a million of these have come under the influence of some kind of English education. Moreover, what we ask for at present is a voice in the government of the country, not for the whole population, but for such portion of it as has been qualified by education to discharge properly the responsibilities of such association. Another argument brought forward in favour of maintaining the present bureaucratic monopoly of power is that though the educated classes make a grievance of it, the mass of the people are quite indifferent in the matter. Now, in the first place, this is not true. However it may suit the

interests of the officials to deny the fact, the educated classes are, in the present circumstances of India, the natural leaders of the people. Theirs is the Vernacular Press, the contents of which do not fail to reach the mass of our population; in a hundred ways they have access to the minds of the latter; and what the educated Indians think today, the rest of India thinks tomorrow. Moreover, do the officials realise how their contention condemns their rule on the basis of their own mouths? For it means that only so long as the people of India are kept in ignorance and their faculties are forced to lie dormant, that they do not raise any objection to the present system of administration. The moment education quickens those faculties and clears their vision, they range themselves against a continuance of the system!

### *Our Immediate Demands*

Gentlemen, a number of important questions will come up before you for discussion during the next two days, and following the practice of previous Congresses, you will, no doubt, record after due deliberation, your views on them in the form of resolutions. This is, of course, necessary; but may I suggest that, for purposes of effective agitation in the immediate future, we should now concentrate our main energies on certain selected portions of our programme. Speaking broadly, most of the reforms that we have been advocating may be grouped under four heads: (1) Those which aim at securing for our people a larger and larger share in the administration and control of our affairs; these include a reform of our Legislative Councils, the appointment of Indian to the Secretary of State's Council and the Executive Councils in India, and a steady substitution of the Indian for the European agency in the public service of the country; (2) those which seek to improve the methods of administration, such as the separation of Judicial from Executive functions, Police Reform, and similar proposals; (3) those which propose a readjustment of financial arrangements with the object of securing a reduction of the burden of the tax-payers and a more efficient application of our resources; under this head come a reduction of military charges, the moderating of land assessment and so forth; and (4) those which urge the adoption of measures calculated to improve the condition of the mass of the people; these include a vigorous extension of primary education, facilities for industrial and technical instruction, grants for improved sanitation, and a real attempt to deal with the alarming indebtedness of the peasantry. Now what I would most earnestly and respectfully suggest is that we should select from each group such reforms as may be immediately urged with the greatest effect and press them forward in this country and in England with all the energy we can command.

'In my humble opinion, our immediate demands should be: (1) A reform of our Legislative Councils, i. e. raising the proportion of elected members to one-half, requiring the budgets to be formally passed by the Councils, and empowering the members to bring forward amendments, with safeguards for bringing the debates to a close in a reasonable time. The presidents of the



Councils should have the power of veto. The Viceroy's Legislative Council consists at present of 25 members, of whom only five are elected, one by the Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta — a body of Europeans — and the other four by four provinces. We must ask for the proportion of elected members to be now raised to 12. Of this number one seat might be given to commerce and one to certain industries, and the remaining ten should be assigned to different provinces, two to each of the three older provinces, and one each to the remaining. And, to begin with, the right of members to move amendments may be confined to one amendment each. The two members for commerce and industries will generally be Europeans, and they will ordinarily vote with Government. Thus even if all the ten provincial members voted together, they would be only 10 out of 25. Ordinarily they will not be able to carry a motion against the Government, but on exceptional occasions they may obtain the support of two or three men from the other side, and then the moral effect of the situation will be considerable. In the Provincial Legislative Councils, we must have an increase in the number of members, each district of a province being empowered to send a member. The objection that these bodies will, in that case, be somewhat unwieldy is not entitled to much weight.

(2) The appointment of at least three Indians to the Secretary of State's Council, to be returned, one each, by the three older provinces.

(3) The creation of Advisory Boards in all Districts throughout India, whom the heads of districts should be bound to consult in important matters of administration concerning the public before taking action. For the present, their functions should be only advisory, the Collectors or District Magistrates being at liberty to set aside their advice at their discretion. Half the members of a Board should be elected representatives of the different Talukas or subdivisions of the district, and the other half should consist of the principal District Officers and such non official gentlemen as the head of the district may appoint. These Boards must not be confounded with what are known as District Local Boards. There is, at present, too much of what may be called Secretariat rule with an excessive multiplication of central departments. District administration must be largely freed from this, and reasonable opportunities afforded to the people concerned to influence its course, before final decisions are arrived at. If such Boards are created we may, in course of time, expect them to be entrusted with some real measure of control over the district administration. The late Mr. Ranade used to urge the importance of such Boards very strongly. If ever we are to have real local Government in matters of general administration, the creation of these Boards will pave the way for it. One great evil of the present system of administration is its secrecy. This will be materially reduced, so far as district administration is concerned, by the step proposed.

(4) The recruitment of the judicial branch of the Indian Civil Service from the legal profession in India.

- (6) A reduction of military expenditure.
- (7) A large extension of primary education.
- (8) Facilities for industrial and technical education.
- (9) An experimental measure to deal with the indebtedness of the peasantry over a selected area.

I think, gentlemen, if we now concentrate all our energies on some such programme, we may within a reasonable time see results which will not be altogether disappointing. One thing is clear. The present is a specially favourable juncture for such an effort. In our own country, there is sure to be a great rebound of public opinion after the repression to which it has been subjected during the last three years. And in England, for the first time since the Congress movement began, the Liberal and Radical party will come into real power. My recent visit to England, during which I enjoyed somewhat exceptional opportunities to judge of the situation, has satisfied me that a strong current has already set in there against that narrow and aggressive Imperialism, which only the other day seemed to be carrying everything before it. The new Prime Minister<sup>1</sup> is a tried and trusted friend of freedom. And as regards the new Secretary of State for India, what shall I say? Large numbers of educated men in this country feel towards Mr. Morley as towards a Master, and the heart hopes and yet it trembles, as it had never hoped or trembled before. He, the reverent student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone — will he courageously apply their principles and his own to the government of the country, or will he too succumb to the influences of the India Office around him, and thus cast a cruel blight on hopes, which his own writings have done so much to foster? We shall see; but in any case his appointment, as Secretary of State for India, indicates how strongly favourable to our cause the attitude of the new Ministry is. Mr. Ellis, the new Under-Secretary of State for India, is openly known to be a friend of our aspirations. A more gratifying combination of circumstances could not be conceived, and it now rests with us to turn it to the best advantage we can for our motherland.

### *Conclusion*

Gentlemen, one word more and I have done. I have no wish to underrate the difficulties that lie in our path, but I am convinced more than ever that they are not insuperable. Moreover, the real moral interest of a struggle, such as we are engaged in, lies not so much in the particular readjustment of present institutions which we may succeed in securing, as in the strength that the conflict brings us to be a permanent part of ourselves. The whole life of a people, which is broader and deeper than what is touched by purely political institutions, is enriched even by failures, provided the effort has been all that it should be. For such enrichment the present struggle is invaluable. "The true end of our work," said Mr. Ranade nine years ago, "is to renovate, to purify, and also to perfect

<sup>1</sup> Sir HENRY CAMPBELL — BANNERMAN, Prime Minister (1905-08).

the whole man by liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of duty, and developing to the full all his powers. Till so renovated, purified, and perfected, we can never hope to be what our ancestors once were — a chosen people, to whom great tasks were allotted and by whom great deeds were performed. Where this feeling animates the worker, it is a matter of comparative indifference in what particular direction it asserts itself and in what particular method it proceeds to work. With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly by all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and, lastly, with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached — this is the promised land. Happy are they, who see it in distant vision; happier those who are permitted to work and clear the way on to it; happiest they, who live to see it with their eyes and tread upon the holy soil once more. Famine and pestilence, oppression and sorrow, will then be myths of the past, and the gods will once again descend to the earth and associate with men, as they did in times which we now call mythical." Gentlemen, I can add nothing that may be worthy of being placed by the side of these beautiful words. I will only call to your minds the words of another great teacher of humanity who asks us to keep our faith in spite of trying circumstances and warns us against the presumption of despairing, because we do not see the whole future clearly before our eyes :

Our times are in His hand

Who saith a whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid.

## BOYCOTT RESOLUTION

### *Gokhale's Clarification*

*The Indian National Congress, which met at Calcutta under the presidentship of Dadabhai Naoroji,<sup>1</sup> had before it, on December 28 1906 a resolution which expressed the view that the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition of that province, was and is legitimate. Some of the speakers to the resolution especially Babu Bipin Chandra Pal,<sup>2</sup> tried to give it a wider interpretation than was warranted by the terms of the resolution. In clarifying the position Gokhale spoke as follows*

I wish just to say a few words, before this proposition is put to the vote. The proposition, as it has been placed before you, is this

That having regard to the fact that the people of this country have little or no voice in its administration and that their representations to the Government do not receive due consideration, this Congress is of opinion that the boycott movement, inaugurated in Bengal, by way of protest against the partition of that province, was and is legitimate

Gentlemen, we, who are assembled in this Congress, are bound by the resolutions we pass. Individual interpretations of individual resolutions are matters which concern individuals only. Every individual is entitled to put his own interpretation upon a resolution. It is a matter of English. The resolution put before you means that the boycott movement that has been introduced to mark the resentment of the people against the Partition of Bengal was and is, in the opinion of the Congress and the people of India, legitimate. To this extent we all agree, up to this point we all go together. Beyond this, if any of you want to go, go by all means but do not go in the name of the Congress. You go forward as individuals, you have every right to do that, we do not question that by any means, but do not drag the rest who do not want to go with you. Let us be fair, we are bound by the resolutions of the Congress, we are not bound by the speeches of individuals. I do not object to anybody making any speech he likes. Let us guard ourselves against any misapprehension. This question was carefully considered and it was settled that it should be confined to Bengal. We stand by Bengal in the distress and

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 82

<sup>2</sup> BIPIN CHANDRA PAL (1885-1932), made his maiden speech in the Congress on the Arms Act (1887), edited *Swarajya* monthly in England and *New India* weekly in India, was also closely associated with the *Bande Mataram* daily founded by Aramb Ghose sentenced for sedition (1911), went to England as a member of the Home Rule delegation, leader of the new school during the post Bengal Partition days, author of *Indian Nationalism* (1918)

suffering that Bengal has to endure, but let not Bengal drag us into paths in which we may or may not care to go. No opinion is expressed as regards other Provinces. The only statement, that the resolution makes, is that the boycott, which has been adopted in Bengal to mark their resentment against the partition of that Province, is legitimate and that is the opinion of us all and to that extent we are bound by this resolution.

[When the President put the resolution to vote, all voted for it, with the exception of Mr. P. R. Sundaram Iyer who voted against it and Mr. B. N. Sarma who did not vote either way ]

## CONGRÈSS THANKS GOKHALE

*A resolution thanking Gokhale for his work in England as a delegate of the Congress was passed on 29th December 1906 by the Congress held at Calcutta. The resolution ran as follows*

That this Congress records its sense of high appreciation of the eminent public service rendered by the Hon ble Mr G K Gokhale, C I E, during his recent visit to England as the Delegate of the Congress

*After the resolution was carried amidst great enthusiasm and loud and prolonged cheers, Gokhale responded with the following speech*

It is a late hour, but I must crave your indulgence just for a few moments. I beg, in the first place, to tender to you my humble and most sincere thanks for the resolution which you have just now adopted. The resolution is couched in terms, altogether too generous, but leaving that aside, I may say at once that it gives me the same feeling of pride and pleasure with which a servant learns that he has given satisfaction to his master.

### *Democracy in England*

When at the last Congress, you imposed this duty of proceeding to England upon me, I do not mind confessing it today, that I accepted that responsibility with considerable misgiving. Last year, my friend, Mr Lala Lajpat Rai,<sup>1</sup> and myself had gone on a Congress Mission to England, but that work was one with which I was somewhat familiar. It was that of political agitation, of going about the country and addressing public meetings, but this time I was asked by you to go there to press upon the attention of the authorities, the more pressing questions of Indian reform. The authorities in England in connection with India are two, viz the Secretary of State and the British Parliament. It was a difficult matter in some respects, but the difficulties of the situation were removed by the great change that had taken place in the position of the two parties during the interval. England, which has long been committed to Imperialism, suddenly found herself in the face of a protest from Democracy in England. This Democracy rose in wrath and hurled from power the party which had ruined the name of England all over the world on account of its braggart Imperialism. The new Government came into power with a House of Commons strongly Democratic and friend of freedom all over the world. The situation had therefore greatly improved in the meanwhile and that greatly facilitated the work you asked me to undertake.

*New Secretary of State*

The Secretary of State in Council was another difficulty. The Council of the Secretary of State is composed, as you all know, of men, whose only idea of the Government of India is, to let it continue in the hands of the present officials. However, we have a Secretary of State, who approached the question with an open mind and who, I am glad to say gratefully, gave me every opportunity to place before him, any such question as I wanted to. He gave me a series of interviews. He made it a condition at the beginning that these interviews should be treated as confidential. I am, therefore, not in a position to say anything as to what passed between us. I may, however, say in general that I was given every opportunity to put the case of the Congress. What the result of these interviews will be, time alone will show. My own hope is that in the course of the next two years we shall see considerable changes in several directions. I will say no more about the Secretary of State.

*— and the House of Commons*

But I will say one word about the House of Commons. The present House of Commons must not be confounded with the previous House of Commons. It is altogether a different kind of House. Everybody, who goes there, feels and says so. They say, not for sixty or seventy years, a House of Commons, like this, had ever assembled in England. There is a fervour for reform, fervour for freedom and for national aspirations in this House of Commons such as was never witnessed even in free England. Our President has told you that there is a revival at the present moment, a revival of the old spirit of England, the old spirit of liberty which is associated with the honoured names of Cobden and Bright and similar other persons. There is not the least doubt about that. I may tell you more than that. The House of Commons is anxious to do something for India but only they do not know how to proceed for they do not possess much knowledge about India. They have to depend upon reports which are conflicting, because official versions are one way and popular versions are the other way and they do not know how to make up their minds. But their instincts, their traditions and sympathies, their convictions are all ranged on our side. That is a factor which would be powerful in counteracting the influence of the bureaucratic India Office. That is the position, so far as the work is concerned.

*Nations by Themselves Are Made*

I will say one word more and bring my remarks to a close. I have always held, and I think every Congressman has always held, that most of our work has got to be done by ourselves. I have found that nine tenths of the work lies on ourselves. So far back as twenty years ago, the founder of the Congress,

Mr. A.O. Hume,<sup>1</sup> addressed certain verses to Congressmen. I will quote four lines from his verses :

Sons of Ind, why sit ye idle  
Wait ye for some Deva's aid ?  
Buckle to, be up and doing,  
Nations by themselves are made

This, Mr. Hume said to us twenty years ago, and every Congressman who is worth anything has always felt this and realised it all the time; but there are certain difficulties in our path which can be overcome only with the assistance of the British Democracy of today. If and when we make further progress it will be possible for us to rely solely on the strength of our public opinion; but, at the present moment, when public opinion is not as strong as it should be and officials have more power than they should have, it is necessary that we should seek the co-operation and support of the British Democracy in England, who, after all, are the masters of these officials and to whose dictates they have to pay heed.

This is the reason why friends who believe in English agitation, say that the work, that is being done there, ought not to be discontinued. I fully share this view. I beg you to remember that if anything is done to interrupt it, the result of it will have to be borne by ourselves. I do not say that we should lay the most emphasis on that work. The two things are parts of one whole. We must go on building up our public opinion, building up our strength. At the same time, while the existing arrangements last, we should seek the assistance of British Democracy — not retired Anglo-Indian officials — which, after all, has been the friend of freedom, in order to keep in check the officials here and in order to get such stimulus as may be necessary to push on things forward. I do not like to detain you any further except to thank you once again.

<sup>1</sup> A. O. HUME, I.C.S. (1829-1912); ornithologist and father of Indian National Congress (1885); helped in bringing out a vernacular paper *Janamitra* (1859); prepared schemes of redemption of agricultural indebtedness and village panchayats; secretary, Government of India, Revenue and Agriculture Department; declined offer of Lieutenant-Governorship; retired (1882); secretary, Indian National Congress for many years.



## THE WORK BEFORE US

*The following speech was delivered by Gokhale at a public meeting in Allahabad on the 4th February 1907, with Pandit Motilal Nehru<sup>1</sup> in the chair*

Gokhale began by thanking the audience for the cordial reception which they had given him. That was not his first visit to Allahabad. He had been there twice before and he could well recall the impression which the city first made on him — how he was filled with feelings of rapture and of awe at the sight of the two great rivers which have for ages meant so much to every Hindu — the holy Ganges and the noble Jumna — and how he gazed and gazed on their wonderful confluence, as though rooted to the spot, his mind sweeping back all the time over the chequered past of the ancient land, her glories and misfortunes, the faiths, the hopes, the achievements, the trials of their race. That was seventeen years ago and since then the name of Allahabad had moved him strangely — had stirred within him emotions which it was a privilege to feel. They could imagine, therefore, with what pleasure he visited the city again and how grateful he felt to them for the opportunity they had given him to meet them there that evening.

### *A New Dawn*

The question of questions that was engaging their minds at that moment was that of their present political condition and their future, and Gokhale proposed to speak to them that day of the work that lay before them and must be done, if ever their aspiration to achieve political freedom for themselves was to be realised. "There is no doubt," he said, "that the present is a most important juncture in the affairs of our country — one of those decisive moments when the mind of the people is about to take a great step forward and when a right judgment means so much new strength added to the nation and a wrong judgment is fraught with consequences far graver than on other occasions. In several respects the situation is one which every lover of the country will regard with deep satisfaction. The new century has begun well for the East. We have seen a great drama enacted before our eyes, which is exercising a profound influence over the relations between the East and the West. The very air around us is charged with new thought-currents. A new consciousness of power is stirring within us — a new meaning of our existence is breaking upon our mind.

<sup>1</sup> MOTILAL NEHRU (1861-1931), well known political leader and statesman worked as a member of the committee appointed by the Congress to inquire into Punjab martial law excesses (1919), took prominent part in the non-co operation movement, leader of the Swaraj party, one of the authors of the scheme of self government within the Empire which came to be known as the Nehru report.

Lord Curzon's<sup>1</sup> repressive measures have only proved a blessing in disguise. The rapid growth of the Swadeshi sentiment all over the country — and Swadeshimism at its highest means a fervent, passionate, all-embracing love of the motherland — must make every true Indian heart glow with pleasure and pride; and altogether we seem to see the first faint streaks of a new dawn which, in God's Providence, must in course of time grow into the perfect day. There is thus much in the situation over which the heart most truly rejoices, but let me also say that there are elements present, which give rise to a feeling of anxiety and fill one with a certain amount of misgiving." The speaker, therefore, thought that a useful purpose would be served by reviewing briefly their present position so that they might realize with some clearness what their goal was or should be and how far they had advanced in the direction of that goal.

### *The Present Situation*

What were, he asked, the broad features of the situation? They had on one side, the bureaucracy, a small body of foreign officials, who held in their hands practically a monopoly of all political power. These men, who had behind them the vast power of a mighty Empire, had built up in the course of a century an elaborate and imposing fabric of their rule in the country and though this fabric was for the most part like a thing outside the people, hardly touching at any point what might be called their inner life, it bore witness to their great powers of organization, their sense of discipline and their great practical capacity, and invested them with a high prestige in the eyes of the people. On the other side they had the vast mass of the people of the country lying inert and apathetic, except when under the sway of a religious impulse, and only now showing here and there the first signs of a new life, deplorably divided and sub-divided, with hardly any true sense of discipline, plunged in abject poverty and ignorance, and wedded to usages and institutions which, whatever their value for purposes of preservation, were not exactly calculated to promote vigorous, sustained or combined action for purposes of progress. Between the two there stood the educated class with its numbers steadily growing, already exercising extensive influence over the mass of the people and bound by its capacity and education, its knowledge of the needs of the situation, its natural aspirations and its patriotism to lead the people in the new struggle. This class, at one time so well-disposed to British rule, was daily growing more sullen and discontented, resenting the non-fulfilment of solemn promises, feeling keenly the humiliation of its subject position and determined to attain for itself a political status worthy of the self-respect of civilized people.

### *The Goal*

After dwelling on the difficult and complicated nature of the problem which they had to face, the speaker proceeded to consider what should be their goal

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.

in the circumstances "And here at the outset," he said, "let me say that I recognize no limits to my aspiration for our motherland. I want our people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs. I want our men and women without distinction of caste or creed to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion in literature in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can in its essence and its reality, be realized within this Empire." The question was one not of what was theoretically perfect but of what was practically attainable. It was further a question not merely of dreams but also of muscle and character, of capacity, of organization of sacrifice. The cases of the French in Canada and the Boers in South Africa showed that there was room in the Empire for a self respecting India.

### *Constitutional Agitation*

Some of their friends appalled by the extreme difficulty of their task and under the belief that this goal could never be attained had begun to talk of another goal even more impossible of attainment. They were like persons who sought to fly from the evils they knew of to those that they knew nothing about. The goal of self government within the Empire involved a minimum disturbance of existing ideas and it meant proceeding along lines which they understood, however difficult the progress might be. Such a goal moreover, enlisted on their side all that was high minded, freedom loving and honourable in England — and there was much in that country that was high minded freedom loving and honourable. Despite occasional lapses — and some of them most lamentable lapses — despite prolonged reactions inevitable in human affairs, the genius of the British people, as revealed in history, is on the whole made for political freedom for constitutional liberty. It would be madness it would be folly on their part to throw away in the struggle that lay before them these enormous advantages. He was glad to see that one of the leaders of what was known as the New Party — Mr Tilak<sup>1</sup> — had stated in a recent issue of his paper that self government on colonial lines sufficed for him as a thing to work for. Having thus laid down emphatically that the only practical goal before them was self government within the Empire Gokhale proceeded to consider the means by which that goal was to be reached. He could he said point out no royal road. A vast amount of work in various fields was necessary but one thing they must be clear about and that was that the goal being what it was, their reliance must be on what was called constitutional agitation.

The question had often been asked what was constitutional agitation? He would attempt to frame an answer to that question. Constitutional agitation was agitation by methods which they were entitled to adopt to bring about the

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 144

changes they desired through the action of constituted authorities. Thus defined, the field of constitutional agitation was a very wide one. But there were two essential conditions — one, that the methods adopted were such as they were entitled to employ, and secondly, that the changes desired must be obtained only through the action of constituted authorities by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion. Now, what were the methods they were entitled to employ ? The first idea suggested, on a consideration of the question, was that physical force was excluded. Proceeding with the consideration further, the speaker said that three things were excluded — rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion, and resort to crime. Roughly speaking, barring these three things, all else was constitutional. No doubt everything that was constitutional was not necessarily wise or expedient. But that was a different matter. Prayers and appeals to justice lay at one end. Passive resistance, including even its extreme form of non-payment of taxes till redress was obtained at the other end. Judged in that light, nothing that was being done at present in the country was unconstitutional, whatever one might think of the way some persons chose to express themselves. Of course, the question of what was wise and expedient and what was unwise and inexpedient was of the utmost importance, but he would revert to that later. As regards the second condition, namely, that redress must be obtained through the constituted authorities, it was clear that that implied constant pressure being brought to bear on the authorities, and the idea that they should have nothing to do with the authorities was one, not to be entertained. The pressure exerted undoubtedly depended upon the strength and determination of the public opinion behind it, and the necessity of building up that strength and hardening that determination was obviously paramount. But the idea that they should leave the authorities severely alone and seek to attain their goal independently of them was inadmissible and absurd.

### *Achievements of the Congress*

Gokhale next proceeded to point out that the loose talk in which some people indulged, namely, that constitutional agitation had failed in their country, was unjustified, as they had not yet exhausted even a thousandth part of the possibilities of real constitutional agitation. The work done by the Congress during the last twenty-two years was of great value in nation-building. They must not forget that if one part of their inheritance was glory for all time, another part of it was a curse. They had been struggling with increasing success against that curse. The work of the Congress had enabled them to think and feel nationally, had defined their needs, taught them the value of organization and accustomed them to the duties and burdens of public life. More, no doubt, might have been done, if greater zeal, greater devotion and greater sacrifice had been forthcoming in the service of the cause. But the responsibility for that rested upon all; and, perhaps, it was after all true that there was a time and a tide for everything. The last twenty years had been a period of reaction, not only in India,

but also in England. Their inability to obtain certain specific reforms, for which they had been agitating during the time, should not, therefore, be held to establish the futility of their methods. Political privileges could not be had for the mere asking, and they had cost other people prolonged struggles. The moral interest of their struggle would be entirely missed, if they judged of the value of their efforts by tangible immediate results only. The way some of his friends spoke of their disappointments made him almost wish that the few liberties that they enjoyed had not come to them as the spontaneous gift of far-sighted statesmen but had had to be struggled for and won by their exertions.

Of the authorities on whom they had to bring their pressure to bear, the bureaucracy in India must be expected to be more or less hostile to their aspirations. But the great change that had taken place in England during the last year in the position of parties, the revived fervour for freedom and sympathy for national aspirations which was, at the present moment, so marked a feature of the new House of Commons and of the democracy behind it, meant a strong influence in their favour, though how much they benefited by it depended largely upon themselves. He had always held that nine tenths of their work had to be done in this country, where alone the real and enduring strength of the people could be built up. But at the present stage of their progress, an important part of their work lay also in England. By keeping in touch with the democracy there, they could prevent the officials in India from going beyond certain limits in the path of repression, and they could also obtain valuable assistance from that democracy in their present preliminary work of nation building. The question of universal education in India illustrated, for instance, the speaker's meaning. It was a question primarily of funds. Universal education in India meant an annual expenditure of at least five to six crores of rupees. He did not expect that the bureaucracy, left to itself, would ever care to find that money. It was also not to be expected that private or voluntary effort would be forthcoming to cope with a task of that magnitude. But by bringing the pressure of the British democracy to bear on the authorities, there was every possibility of the question being satisfactorily solved. Of late, there had been a tendency in the country to deprecate the value and importance of individual reforms. But they had to make up their minds about it that it was not through any sudden or violent cataclysm but only by successive steps, each perhaps a small one in itself, that their goal was likely to be reached. Conflicting interests had to be reconciled, the advance was on unfamiliar lines and no useful purpose would be served by ignoring obvious limitations.

*"Build Up the Strength" of the People*

But, after all, everyone must recognize that their main work was to build up the strength of their own people. That work, roughly speaking, was three fold. First, the promotion of a closer union among the different sections of the Indian community — between the Hindus and Mahomedans — and among the different sections of the Hindus themselves. Secondly, the development of

a stronger and higher type of character, firm of purpose, and disciplined in action; and thirdly, the cultivation of an intense feeling of nationality throughout the country rising superior to caste and creed and rejoicing in all sacrifice for the motherland, accompanied by a spread of political education among the masses. The speaker dwelt at some length on the necessity and importance of this three-fold work, observing about the Hindu-Mahomedan problem that it was a most difficult one but it certainly was not insoluble. Higher education was largely doing this work in that matter, but the situation called for the exercise of great tact and great forbearance. And he for one felt hopeful that, before very long, all that was high-minded and patriotic among their Mahomedan brethren would be ranged on the side of their country without thought of anything else.

### *New Methods Examined*

The speaker lastly dealt with what he called the new teaching. He had no desire, he said, to engage in any unnecessary controversies. But when their countrymen were being called upon to go in for new methods on the ground that they alone would achieve national salvation, it was incumbent on all workers in the cause of the country to examine the claims made for those methods. They were being told that they should now give up having anything to do with the Government of the country and that by the simple expedient of a universal boycott, they would be able to achieve everything they had in view. Gokhale proceeded first to consider what might be called the industrial boycott. Most of those, he said, who spoke of boycotting foreign goods, only meant to convey by the word that they wanted to use as far as possible Swadeshi articles only, whatever inconvenience, discomfort or extra expense such a course might cause. Now there was no doubt that that was one way of serving the Swadeshi cause, and for the mass of the people, whose wants were simple and who could not directly contribute much to the promotion of new industries perhaps, the only way. It ensured the consumption of articles produced in the country and stimulated the production of new ones, supporting the industries, in their early stages of stress and struggle. In the speaker's opinion, all that was really included in true Swadeshi, which was not merely a pious wish for the industrial prosperity of the country, but implied a voluntary sacrifice according to each man's opportunities for the building up of indigenous industries. But the use of the word boycott to convey this meaning was unfortunate, for boycott really implied a vindictive desire to injure another, even if one had to injure oneself in doing so. This stirred up unnecessary ill-will against the Swadeshi cause and was calculated to pile up unnecessary difficulties in its path. It was no easy task which confronted them and they needed for its successful accomplishment co-operation from all quarters. Gokhale mentioned the introduction of Egyptian cotton by the Bombay Government into Sind and the large possibilities which that opened up before them as an illustration of his meaning. However, he did not wish to lay too much emphasis on that aspect of the ques-

tion What he wanted to point out principally was that the exclusion from their markets of foreign goods, of which they imported a hundred crores worth a year at present, was bound to be a slow affair, and that even the attainment of a substantial measure of success in that work, however helpful in increasing our resources, would not much affect the present political domination, which, in certain conceivable circumstances, might then tend to become even harsher.

### *A General Boycott*

Gokhale then turned to the general or political boycott that some were advocating Talking of its practicability, he considered it a preposterous thing that anybody should imagine that such a thing was feasible in the present state of the country The building up of national schools and colleges all over the country out of private resources, on any scale worth speaking about, would take years and years of time and a tremendous amount of sacrifice on the part of the people, and before anything substantial had been done, to talk of boycotting existing institutions was sheer madness It should be noted that the more thoughtful advocates of national education urged, not the destruction, but the supplementing of the work done by Government in the field of education The speaker recognized serious defects existing in the present system, but it had done and was doing much good, and the fostering of the present national spirit was directly its outcome

As regards boycotting Government service, the speaker would not be sorry to see the present scramble for Government employment cease, to see, at any rate, that a larger proportion of his educated countrymen struck out independent careers for themselves They would then have more workers devoted to the service of the country He himself had been preaching for some time past that a few at least of the young men who left the Universities should give up all thought of personal advancement and devote themselves in a spirit of sacrifice to the service of the motherland But to talk of a general boycott of Government service in their situation was ludicrous in the extreme The attempt at boycott would be felt by the Government, if only the number of men wanted by it for its work failed at any time to come forward Well, with all respect, he must decline to consider that as a practical proposal

Finally, there was the boycott of honorary offices, such as seats on Local and Municipal Boards and on Legislative Councils If the present men resigned, enough men would still be forthcoming to take their places, and those who resigned would soon find that they had only thrown away such opportunities as could be had at present of serving the public They must seek steadily to increase what little powers of administration and control they possessed and they would be injuring and not advancing the interests they had at heart by the course proposed The speaker said that they must all resist as much as they could the attempt to shift the foundations of their public life He would make one suggestion to those who advocated a general boycott as the sole, or indeed any, means of achieving self government in the present state of India Non-

payment of taxes was the most direct and the most effective form of passive resistance, and it had, moreover, the merit of bringing home to each man the responsibility of his own action. If some of those who were talking of employing passive resistance to achieve self-government at the present stage of the country's progress would adopt that form of passive resistance, they would soon find out where they stood and how far they were supported.

### *Our Destiny*

In concluding his address, Gokhale exhorted his countrymen to sink small differences and work together whole heartedly in the service of India. "We cannot," he said, "allow ourselves to be split up into small sections fighting with one another for the sake of petty differences. After all, there is a destiny which is really shaping our ends, and we are all engaged in merely rough hewing them. Whoever promotes union in the country, whoever preaches Swadeshi, whoever inculcates lessons of self-sacrifice, whoever builds up in any shape or form the strength of the nation — politically, socially, industrially, morally — he is a fellow worker, a brother. The struggle before us is a long and a weary one, and while the thought of it should stimulate all our energies, undue impatience will only recoil upon our own heads. Nation building is nowhere an easy task. In India it is beset with difficulties which are truly formidable and which will tax to the uttermost all our resources, and all our devotion. Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes, we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks."



## THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

*In the second week of February 1907, Gokhale delivered a series of public addresses at Lucknow. The following address, the second of the series, was delivered on 9th February 1907*

### *Swadeshi and Swadeshim*

I propose to speak to you today of the economic condition of India and the Swadeshi movement. One of the most gratifying signs of the present times is the rapid growth of the Swadeshi sentiment all over the country during the last two years. I have said more than once here, but I think the idea bears repetition, that Swadeshim at its highest is not merely an industrial movement but that it affects the whole life of the nation — that Swadeshim at its highest is a deep, passionate, fervent all embracing love of the motherland, and that this love seeks to show itself not in one sphere of activity only but in all — it invades the whole man, and it will not rest until it has raised the whole man. Now the first thing I want to say about this movement is that it has come here to stay. We often have movements which make a little noise for a time and then disappear without leaving any permanent mark behind. I think it safe to say that the Swadeshi movement is not going to be one of that kind, and my own personal conviction is that in this movement we shall ultimately find the true salvation of India. However, ladies and gentlemen, I do not wish to speak to you today about Swadeshim in general. The more immediate question before us is Swadeshim as applied to the present economic situation of India — its scope and character, the materials with which it has to work, and the difficulties it has to overcome before it can achieve in any degree the true industrial regeneration of the country.

### *Industrial Domination by England*

Gentlemen, as Mr. Ranade<sup>1</sup> once pointed out, the industrial domination of one people by another attracts much less attention than the political domination of a foreign people. The industrial domination is less visible and does its work in a more insidious manner. The disadvantages of a political domination lie very much on the surface. We see a foreign race monopolizing all power and authority and keeping the people in a state of subjection. These are facts which we observe and feel every day of our lives. Human feelings often matter more to humanity than human interests, and when your feelings are hurt in various directions, as in a state of subjection, they are bound to be — I do not mean to throw any unnecessary blame on any one — their thought

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 197

fills you night and day and makes you think constantly of the fact that you are living under a foreign domination. On the other hand, the industrial domination of one people by another may come in an attractive garb. If, as has been the case with India, this foreign domination comes in the shape of more finished articles — especially articles that administer to the daily wants of a community — you unconsciously welcome the domination, you fall a victim to its temptations and its attractiveness. And it is only when the evil grows beyond certain limits, that your attention is drawn to it. Now this is precisely what has happened in the case of India. As soon as Western education came to be imparted to the people of this country, their first thoughts were directed to their political status. Of course they also thought of their social institutions. Those who are acquainted with the history of the last fifty years, know that the struggle for political and social reforms started almost simultaneously, but I do not wish to go into that on this occasion. What I want to point out is that the thought of the industrial domination of India by England did not really occur to men's minds at that time. At any rate, it did not occur in that pointed manner in which the thought of political domination did. The result was that the main current of our public activity came to be directed towards the realization of our political aspirations, and about twenty-two years ago when the Congress came into existence for the political advancement of the people, the question of this industrial domination, though it had struck a few thoughtful minds, did not receive that consideration at the hands of the leaders of the people that it deserved. However, the industrial problem and its importance are now receiving their due recognition, and today at any rate we appear to have gone so far in this direction that there is now the risk of the industrial problem actually throwing into the shade the political problem which, however, to a great extent lies at the root of the industrial problem.

Gentlemen, when we come to this question of India's industrial domination by England, we come to what may be described as the most deplorable result of *British rule in this country*. In other matters there are things on the credit side and things on the debit side. Take, for instance, the political and administrative results of British rule. We have here the shutting out of a whole race from positions of real trust and responsibility where powers of initiative can be developed, and this is producing disastrous results on the character of the people. We also see that the forcible disarming of a population is bound to crush the manhood of the nation. In these directions we find that a steady deterioration of the race has set in. But there are compensating advantages, and I am not sure that the balance is not on the latter side. Thus, the introduction of Western education, with its liberalizing influence, has been a great blessing to the people. We now understand better the necessity of equal treatment for all; we also see that unless the status of woman is raised, man by himself will not be able to advance very far; and altogether this Western education is doing most noble work in the country. Then the British have established, on the whole, equal justice between Indian and Indian — as between European

and Indian, that is a different matter—but between Indian and Indian it is equal, though it is costly, and that is more than can be said of previous rulers. Railways, Telegraphs, Post Offices and other modern appliances of material civilization have also been introduced into India by the present rulers, and it is fair to acknowledge that these things have added greatly to the comforts and conveniences of life and are a powerful help to our progress. Lastly, there are the blessings of peace and of order well and firmly established. These are things which must be set against the steady deterioration of which I have already spoken, and I am not prepared to say that the balance is not, on the whole, on the side of the advantages.

### *Wealth of India*

But when you come to the industrial field you find that the results have been disastrous. You find very little here on the credit side and nearly all the entries on the debit side. Now this is a serious statement to make, but I think it can be substantiated. I would ask you, first, to glance at what India was industrially before the English came into this country. It is true that there is very little direct or statistical evidence on this subject. But the statements made by travellers who came to this country supply a fair indication of how things were, though they do not enable us to establish a conclusion accurately or satisfactorily. We find, for instance, praise of India's riches in every place, we find also here and there a description of the poverty of the mass of the people. And, on the whole, I think it is fair to say this—that, compared with other countries, India could not have been worse, and very probably she was better off than most other countries, and I think this description may well apply to her right up to the end of Mahomedan rule. India's reputed wealth was the attracting cause of so many invasions. Large wealth must, therefore, have been accumulated in some hands, and so far as the bulk of the population was concerned, as the land was fertile and the people were industrious and thrifty and, on the whole, free from vices, such as drink, it is fair to conclude that the people must have enjoyed a considerable degree of rude agricultural prosperity. It is not proper to compare the West of today, with all its production of machinery and steam, with the India of 200 years ago. Before steam and machinery were employed in the West, the West too was largely agricultural and she had then no special advantages for the production of wealth over us. And I believe that, judged by the standards of those days, we could not have been poorer, and very probably we were richer than most Western countries.

Then there was the excellence of our productions which attracted the attention of Western nations, the fine muslins and many other things exported from this country showed what a high level of excellence had been reached by our people in industrial production. When the Mahomedan rulers came, they settled in this country, and there was no question of any foreign drain. Things, therefore, must have, on the whole, continued as they had been before their time.

*England's Policy*

Then we come to British rule. Gentlemen, I refer, on this occasion, to the past only in order that, in the light of it, we might understand the present and derive therefrom guidance and assistance for the future. The early days of the East India Company's rule were as bad as could possibly be from the standpoint of India's industrial system. Deliberate steps were taken by the Company to destroy the industries of the people and to make room for Western manufactures. This has been acknowledged by English writers themselves. This was England's policy, not towards India alone, but towards America and Ireland also. America got rid of it by shaking off England's dominion altogether. Ireland struggled to do the same, but did not succeed. India suffered the worst under the operation of the evil policy. The object aimed at by the East India Company was to reduce India to the level of a merely agricultural country producing raw material only, without factories to manufacture the same. This was the first stage in our industrial decay.

*Free Trade*

The second stage began when England forced on us the policy of free trade, i.e. of leaving the door wide open to the competition of the whole world. England's own policy for centuries had been that of Protection, and by that policy she had built up her vast industrial system. But about sixty years ago, after Protection had done its work, she decided to give up the old policy and adopt Free Trade, mainly to set right the abuses to which Protection had given rise. England depends on foreign countries for most of her raw materials, and she supplies manufactured articles practically to the whole world. It was, therefore, to the advantage of England that there should be no export or import duties, as one result of such duties was to add to the cost of the articles supplied to foreign countries. But forcing this policy of free trade upon a country circumstanced as India was, was a wholly different thing and was bound to produce results of a most disastrous character. Our things were made with the hand; we did not possess anything like the combination, skill or enterprise of the West. Steam and machinery were unknown in the country. Our industries were, therefore, bound to perish as a result of the shock of this sudden competition to which they were exposed, and as a matter of course the introduction of Free Trade in this country was followed by the rapid destruction of such small industries as had existed in the country, and the people were steadily pressed back more and more on the one resource of agriculture. I should not have deplored even this destruction of our indigenous manufactures if the Government had assisted us in starting others to take their place. The German economist—List<sup>1</sup>—whose work on Political Economy is the best that Indian students can consult, explains how the State can help an old-world agricultural

<sup>1</sup> FRIEDRICK LIST (1789-1846); Professor of Administration and Politics at the University of Tübingen.

country, suddenly brought within the circle of the world's competition to build up a new system of industries. He says that the destruction of hand-industries is a necessary stage through which an industrially backward country must pass before she can take rank with those which use steam and machinery and advanced scientific processes and appliances in their industrial production. When hand made goods are exposed to the competition of machine made goods, it is inevitable that the former should perish. But when this stage is reached there comes in the duty of the State. The State by a judicious system of protection should then ensure conditions under which new infant industries can grow up. And until the new industries can stand on their own legs, it becomes the duty of the State to have a protective wall around. This is what America—already one of the richest nations in the world, and one which will yet reach the foremost place—has done, and the case is the same with France and Germany. The result of England's policy in India had, however, been to facilitate more and more the imports of foreign commodities, until there is no country on the face of the earth today which is so dependent on the foreign producer as India is. At the present moment about 70 per cent of our exports are raw material raised from the soil and exported in that condition. If we had the skill, enterprise, capital and organization to manufacture the greater part of this material, there would be so many industries flourishing in the country. But the material goes out and comes back in the shape of manufactured commodities, having acquired a much higher price in the process of manufacture.

Again, if you look at your imports, you will find that 60 per cent of them are manufactured goods. They are goods which have been made by other people, so that all you have got to do with them is to consume them. If this was all, if the steady rustication of India—her being steadily pushed back on the one resource of agriculture—was all that we had to deplore as the result of the present policy, the situation bad enough as it would undoubtedly have been, would not have been so critical. But coupled with political domination, this has produced a state of things which can only be described as intolerable. The total imports of India are worth about 100 crores of rupees every year. Our total exports, on the other hand, amount to about 150 crores a year.

*“Bleeding”, the Root of Economic Mischief*

In other words every year about 100 crores worth of goods come to us, and we part with 150 crores worth of goods. After taking into consideration the precious metals that come into the country to redress a part of the balance, we still find that a loss of about 30 to 40 crores a year has to be borne by India. Now, I will put a simple question to those present here. If a hundred rupees come into your house every month and a hundred and fifty rupees go out, will you be growing richer or poorer? And if this process goes on year after year, decade after decade what will be your position after a time? This has been the case with India now for many years. Every year between 30 and 40

crores of rupees go out of India never to come back. No country—not even the richest in the world—can stand such a bleeding as this. Bleeding is a strong word, but it was first used with regard to this very process by a great English statesman—the late Lord Salisbury<sup>1</sup>—who was Prime Minister of England for a long time and was before that Secretary of State for India. Now this bleeding is really at the root of the greater part of the economic mischief that we have to face today. It means that this money, which would have been available to the people, if it had remained in this country, as capital for industrial purposes, is lost to us. The result is that there is hardly any capital of our own forthcoming for industrial purposes. Do not be misled by the fact that a few individuals appear to be rich and have a little money to invest. You must compare India in this matter with other countries, and then you will find that there is hardly any capital accumulated by us to devote to industrial development. One of the greatest students of Indian Economics—the late Mr. Justice Ranade—once calculated that our annual savings could not be more than 8 to 10 crores of rupees. Put it even at 20 crores; what is that in a vast country like India compared with the hundreds and thousands of crores accumulated annually by the people of the West? This, then, is at the root of our troubles.

I do not say that there are no considerations on the other side. It might, for instance, be said that the railways in this country have been constructed with English capital. About 375 crores have been so far spent to build these railways, and it is only fair that for this capital India should pay a certain sum as interest. Englishmen have also invested British capital in indigo, tea, and other industries. A part of this capital has no doubt come out of their own savings made in this country, but whether the money had been earned here or imported from England, the investors are, of course, entitled to a reasonable rate of interest on it. But after a deduction is made on account of this interest, there still remains a sum of over 30 crores as the net loss that India has to bear year by year. You may ask what politics has got to do with this. Well, the greater part of this loss is due to the unnatural political position of India, and I think we shall not be far wrong if we put the annual drain, due to political causes directly and indirectly, at about 20 crores of rupees. The greater part of the 'Home Charges' of the Government of India, which now stand at about 18 millions sterling or 27 crores of rupees, comes under this description. To this has to be added a portion at least of the annual savings of European merchants, lawyers, doctors, and such other persons, as the dominant position of the Englishman in the country gives these classes special advantages which their Indian competitors do not enjoy. Then there are the earnings of the English officials and the British troops in the country. And altogether I am convinced that it is not an extravagant estimate to put the annual cost to India of England's political domination at 20 crores of rupees,

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 151.

the remaining ten crores being lost on account of our industrial domination by England

### *The Drain Further Analysed*

This, then, is the extent of the 'bleeding' to which we are subjected year after year! It is an enormous economic evil, and as long as it is not substantially reduced, the prospect cannot be a cheering one. After all, what can you do with a small amount of capital? You must not be led away by the fact that, from time to time, you hear of a new industrial concern being started here or there. The struggle is a much bigger one than that. It is like the struggle between a dwarf and a giant. If you will form the least idea of the resources of the Western people, then you will understand what a tremendously difficult problem we have to face in this economic field. If this continuous bleeding is to cease, it is incumbent that our men should be employed more and more in the service of the State, so that pensions and furlough charges might be saved to the country. The stores which the Government of India purchases in England should be purchased locally as far as possible. In other directions also our position must be improved. But, I think we should not be practical, if we did not recognize that any important change in the political relations between England and India could come only gradually. It is not by a sudden and violent movement that relief will come. It will only come as we slowly build up our own strength and bring it to bear upon the Government. As this strength is increased, so will the drain be diminished. The industrial drain—due to the fact that we depend so largely for our manufactures upon foreign countries—is really speaking but a small part of the drain—about one third or ten crores of rupees a year. This means that if we ever succeeded in reaching a position of entire self reliance industrially, it would still leave about two-thirds of the present annual drain untouched. Moreover, such entire dependence upon yourselves for industrial purposes is a dream that is not likely to be realized in the near future. I am sorry I must trouble you with a few figures, but a question of this kind cannot be adequately considered without bringing in statistics.

### *Improve Agriculture*

What, then, is the position? India, as you know, is for the most part an agricultural country. Sixty-five per cent of the population, according to the last census reports—80 per cent according to the computation of Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup>—depends upon agriculture. The soil is becoming rapidly exhausted and the yield per acre is diminishing. If you compare the yield today with what it was in the time of Akbar, as given in the *Ain-i-Akbar*, you will be astonished to see what deterioration has taken place in the soil. This makes agricultural improvement a matter of great difficulty. You have got to abolish old methods as much as possible and effect improvements by introducing the methods of the West. You have got to introduce agricultural science and improved agri-

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 16

cultural implements, and the question is complicated by the fact that our agricultural production in this country generally is on what is called a small scale. Land is divided and sub-divided, and most of the holdings are so small as not to lend themselves to the use of advanced appliances. The ignorance and resourcelessness of the people also stand in the way and altogether agricultural improvement is bound to be a matter of slow growth. But this is one direction in which you young men can help the country. Instead of scrambling for Government service or overcrowding the already crowded Bar, let a few at least among you acquire agricultural education abroad, acquaint yourselves with the use of advanced agricultural appliances, and then settle down to agricultural work in this country. You will thereby not only improve agriculture for yourselves, but you will also show the way to others, and they will follow when they see the good results obtained by you. The Government, which has only recently awakened to its duty in this matter, has already taken agriculture in hand, but the greater part of this work must be done by ourselves.

### *Textile Self-Sufficiency*

Our next industry, after agriculture, is the textile industry—the cotton industry. Now, taking only the production of mills, we find that last year about one-fourth of what the whole of India needed was produced in India, and three-fourths came from outside. The capital, that is invested in this country, in the textile industry is between 16 and 17 crores of rupees. This may seem a large amount to some of you but what is it compared with the capital invested in this industry in England? In Lancashire alone 300 crores of rupees are invested in this textile industry, and every year the amount is increasing by leaps and bounds. On a rough calculation you will find that if our present production is to be quadrupled, about forty to fifty crores of rupees of additional capital would be wanted. That cannot be a matter of a day. The handloom is doing good work and has some future before it. But do not let us be under a delusion. The main part of the work will have to be done by machinery. It is only in this way that we shall be able to stand the competition of producers of other countries. If we are able to find this capital in the course of the next 10 or 15 years, I for one shall be content. My own fear is that it will take more than that. If by the end of ten years we are able to produce all the cotton cloth we require, I think we shall have done exceedingly well. We must all bend our energies in that direction and try to capture or rather recover this field as soon and as completely as possible. But then, gentlemen, I would say this. The task, even under the most favourable circumstances, is a formidable one, and it is in the highest degree unwise to add to its great difficulty by unnecessary, bitter or lamentable controversies. You require for a satisfactory solution of this problem co-operation from all quarters, including the Government of the country. We have to depend, for the present at any rate, upon foreign countries for our machinery. If, in pursuing our object, care is not taken



to avoid causing unnecessary irritation to others, there is nothing to prevent this Government from hitting back and imposing a heavy tax, say, of 20 or 25 per cent on machinery, which would practically destroy all our chances of increasing our production of cotton goods

The problem is also largely a problem of the necessary quality of cotton being obtained in this country. At one time India produced very fine cotton and the finest muslins were made of it. Unfortunately the cultivation of that cotton has, in course of time, owing to various causes, been given up and the present cotton is of short staple which gives you only a comparatively coarse thread. Now we know from past experience that this land can grow superior cotton. And the Bombay Government have been for a number of years making experiments to introduce into the country Egyptian cotton, and have at last been able to produce a cross between the Egyptian and the Indian, which has taken root. If all the area irrigated in Sind—the conditions of which are similar to those of Egypt—succeeds in growing this cotton, then the finer fabric problem will have been solved. The co-operation of Government in this matter is thus essential, and those who have occasion to talk of the Swadeshi question should not fail to realize that a great responsibility rests upon them. They only unnecessarily increase the difficulties in our path when they talk as though we could do without Government assistance in the matter, and thereby they damage, without meaning to do so, such chances as exist for real industrial progress. But in the case of this cotton industry, I think the outlook, on the whole, is a most hopeful one.

### *Sugar Industry*

I turn next to the sugar industry. At one time we exported sugar, but at the present time sugar comes into this country to the amount of 7 crores a year. Foreign Governments have been helping their people with bounties, and they have discovered methods whereby the cost of production has been greatly reduced. We, on the other hand, still adhere to our old-world methods of production. Sugar-cane is plentiful in all parts of India, especially in your province. If we make up our minds to encourage Indian sugar as far as possible,—and in this case I am glad to be able to say “have nothing to do with foreign sugar”—we should be able, with the co-operation of Government, in a brief time to produce all the sugar we want. In this connection I was glad to notice a statement made by your Lieutenant-Governor<sup>1</sup> the other day in the matter. He said he would rejoice if even a single ton of sugar did not come from other countries. By co-operation, therefore, between the people and the Government the sugar problem would be solved practically at once.

In Bengal, again, they import a good deal of salt from England though other provinces consume mostly Indian salt. With such a vast sea board as India possesses, India ought certainly to be able to produce her own salt. Again, about 20 lakhs worth of umbrellas, 50 lakhs worth of matches and 60 lakhs

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 112.

worth of paper come into the country every year from abroad. All these articles are now being produced here, and with a determination on our part to use these articles as much as possible and encourage their production and consumption, we should soon be able to shut out the foreign supply.

### *India, the Poorest Country*

But, after all is said and done, I want you to recognize that the possibilities in the near future are not very large. I say this not to damp any one's enthusiasm, because I do want that your enthusiasm should sustain itself at its highest glow in this matter. But remember that the competition before us is like that between a giant and a dwarf. Even if we successfully make up our minds to have nothing to do with foreign goods, even then the industrial salvation of India will not have been accomplished. We are the poorest country in the world at the present moment; England, on the other hand, is the richest. The production per head in India is £2 or Rs. 30 according to Government calculation, and about Rs. 20 according to Indian calculation. England's production per head is £40, i. e. about 20 or 30 times greater than that of this country. Take again the buying power of the people as judged by the imports. In England the average imports per head are about £15 or Rs. 235; in the self-governing colonies of England they are £13; even in Ceylon they are £2 per head; but in India they are only six shillings or 4 to 5 rupees per head! There are other figures equally startling. Take, for instance, the deposits in banks. Of course banking is in a much more backward condition in this country than in England. But even making allowance for that, you will see that the disproportion is very great. The deposits in English banks are about 1,200 crores of rupees for a population of about 4 crores. We are 30 crores and our deposits are only 50 crores for the whole of India, and these deposits include also the amount held by European merchants and traders in the country. Again, take the Savings Banks. In the Savings Banks and Trustees Banks in England there are 300 crores deposited today, as against about 12 crores in this country—less than seven annas per head against about Rs. 75 per head in England. You can easily see now how terrible is the disproportion between England's resources and our own. Add to this the fact that machinery has to come from England, and by the time it is set up here, there is already some improvement effected in England. The problem before us is, therefore, a vastly difficult one and it is a solemn duty resting upon every one, who is a real well-wisher of the Swadeshi cause, not to add to that difficulty, if he can help it.

### *Our Principal Needs*

Our resources then are small, and our difficulties are enormous. It behoves us, therefore, not to throw away any co-operation from whatever quarter it may be forthcoming. Remember that, though there is a certain scope for small village industries, our main reliance now—exposed as we are to the competition of the whole world—must be on production with the aid of steam and

machinery From this standpoint, what are our principal needs today? In the first place, there is general ignorance throughout the country about the industrial condition of the world Very few of us understand where we are, as compared with others; and why we are where we are and why others are where they are Secondly, our available capital is small, and it is, moreover, timid. Confidence in one another in the spirit of co operation for industrial purposes is weak, and joint stock enterprise is, therefore, feeble Thirdly, there is a lack of facilities for higher scientific and technical instruction in the country. Lastly, such new articles as we succeed in manufacturing find themselves exposed at once to the competition of the whole world, and as in the beginning at any rate, they are bound to be somewhat inferior in quality and probably higher in price, it is difficult for them to make their way in the Indian market.

### *Forms of Swadeshi*

Now as our needs are various, so the Swadeshi cause requires to be served in a variety of ways and we should be careful not to quarrel with others, simply because they serve the cause in a different way from our own Thus, whoever tries to spread in the country a correct knowledge of the industrial conditions of the world and points out how we may ourselves advance, is a promoter of the Swadeshi cause Whoever again contributes capital to be applied to the industrial development of the country must be regarded as a benefactor of the country and a valued supporter of the Swadeshi movement Then those who organize funds for sending Indian students to foreign countries for acquiring industrial or scientific education—and in our present state we must, for some time to come, depend upon foreign countries for such education—or those who proceed to foreign countries for such education and try to start new industries on their return; or those who promote technical, industrial and scientific education in the country itself—all these are noble workers in the Swadeshi field These three ways of serving the Swadeshi cause are, however, open to a limited number of persons only

But there is a fourth way, which is open to all of us, and in the case of most, it is, perhaps, the only way in which they can help forward the Swadeshi movement It is to use ourselves as far as possible; Swadeshi articles only and to preach to others that they should do the same By this we shall ensure the consumption of whatever articles are produced in the country and we shall stimulate the production of new articles by creating a demand for them The mass of the people cannot contribute much capital to the industrial development of the country Neither can they render much assistance in the matter of promoting higher scientific technical or industrial knowledge among us but they can all render a most important and a most necessary service to the Swadeshi cause by undergoing a little sacrifice to extend a kind of voluntary protection to Swadeshi industries in their early days of stress and struggle In course of time the quality of Swadeshi articles is bound to improve and their cost of production to become less and less And it is no merit if you

them when they can hold their own against foreign articles in quality or price. It is by ensuring the consumption of indigenous articles in their early stage, when their quality is inferior or their price is higher, or when they labour under both these disadvantages, that we can do for our industries what Protectionist Governments have done for theirs by means of State protection. Those, therefore, who go about and preach to the people that they should use, as far as possible, Swadeshi articles only are engaged in sacred work and I say to them : go forward boldly and preach your Gospel enthusiastically. Only do not forget that yours is only one way out of several of serving the Swadeshi cause. And do not do your work in a narrow, exclusive, intolerant spirit which says : ' whoever is not with us is against us. ' But do it in the broader, more comprehensive, more catholic spirit, which says : ' whoever is not against us is with us. ' Try to keep down and not encourage the tendency, which seems to be almost inherent in the Indian mind of today, to let small differences assume undue importance. Harmony, co-operation, union—by these alone can we achieve any real success in our present state.

### *Swadeshi and Boycott*

In this connection I think I ought to say a word about an expression which has, of late, found considerable favour with a section of my countrymen : ' the boycott of foreign goods. ' I am sure most of those who speak of this ' boycott ' mean by it only the use, as far as possible, of Swadeshi articles in preference to foreign articles. Now such use is really included in true Swadeshi but unfortunately the word ' boycott ' has a sinister meaning; it implies a vindictive desire to injure another, no matter what harm you may thereby cause to yourself. And I think we would do well to use only the word Swadeshi to describe our present movement, leaving alone the word ' boycott ' which creates unnecessary ill-will against ourselves. Moreover, remember that a strict ' boycott ' of foreign goods is not at all practicable in our present industrial condition. For when you ' boycott ' foreign goods, you must not touch even a particle of imported articles; and we only make ourselves ridiculous by talking of a resolution which we cannot enforce.

One word more and I have done. In the struggle that lies before us, we must be prepared for repeated disappointments. We must make up our minds that our progress is bound to be slow, and our successes, in the beginning at any rate, comparatively small. But if we go to work with firm faith in our hearts; no difficulties can obstruct our way for long, and the future will be more and more on our side. After all, the industrial problem, formidable as it is, is not more formidable than the political problem. And, to my mind, the two are largely bound together. Ladies and gentlemen, the task which the people of India are now called upon to accomplish is the most difficult that ever confronted any people on the face of the earth. Why it has pleased Providence to set it before us, why we are asked to wade through the deepest part of the stream—to be in the hottest part of the battle—Providence alone knows. But

it is my hope and my faith that we will successfully achieve this task. The situation requires us to devote ourselves to the service of our Motherland in an earnest and self-sacrificing spirit. But what can be higher or nobler or holier or more inspiring than such service? In working for India, we shall *only be working for the land of our birth, for the land of our fathers, for the land of our children.* We shall be working for a country which God has blessed in many ways, but which man has not served so well. And if we do this work as God wants us to do it, our Motherland will yet march onwards and again occupy an honoured place among the nations of the world.

## PROTEST AGAINST THE CAUCUS

Early in 1907 a Caucus was formed by Mr Harrison, Accountant General of Bombay, and others to prevent Sir P. M. Mehta from being elected by the Justices of the Peace to the Municipal Corporation. A representation against the fairness and validity of the election was sent by certain Members of the Legislative Council to the Government of Bombay but the Government sent them a curt reply refusing to interfere. Public surprise and indignation were great and found expression at a large meeting held at Madhava Bang on Sunday the 7th April. Gokhale presided on the occasion and in opening the proceedings spoke as follows

This is in many respects a most memorable gathering, and I thank you sincerely for the great honour you have done me in inviting me to take the chair on this occasion. Perhaps a word of explanation is due from me at the outset as to how it is that I am here today, and why I am taking this somewhat prominent part in these proceedings. It is true that I am not a rate payer of this city nor am I a Justice of the Peace and my habitual place of residence is Poona and not Bombay. And if the question which has convulsed this city for some time past and has brought us in our thousands here this afternoon had been merely a local question—local in the interests it affected local in the issues it involved—my friends in this city would certainly not have asked me to join with them in their protest, neither should I ever have thought of coming here to take part in this meeting. But, gentlemen everybody must now recognize that this matter, even if it ever was local in its scope at any stage, which I very much doubt, has now advanced far beyond that stage, and that issues of serious and far-reaching consequence have arisen in connection with it, which concern not only the inhabitants of this city, but the people of this Presidency and even India as a whole.

### *Freedom of Elections*

The question now is not, who shall sit in the new Corporation on behalf of the Justices, but whether the enormous power which English officials necessarily wield in the country under the present system of administration, is to be employed to interfere with the freedom of popular elections, and to reduce still further the small measure of local self government which has so far been conceded to the people, and whether the Government, instead of putting down such abuse of official position and influence, is to countenance it publicly. Last October His Excellency the Viceroy<sup>2</sup> told the people of this country that, in his opinion, municipal and local boards' administration formed the initial rungs of the ladder of self government, and that we must mount these successfully before we expected to find ourselves on higher rungs. Those among

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 115

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p 71.

us, therefore, who have the success of local self government at heart, and who look forward to the time when a larger share in the government of the country shall be assigned to us, cannot remain indifferent when questions of the utmost importance, affecting the character and growth of local self government in the land, are agitating the public mind and a protest has to be made against wanton and unjustifiable encroachments on popular rights. It is thus as one interested in the steady progress of self government in the country that I stand on this platform here today, and I thank you once again for the honour you have done me by asking me to preside over this meeting.

### *Caucus for Sir Pherozechah Mehta's Exclusion*

Gentlemen the speakers to the different resolutions will, I have no doubt dwell at length with the more important aspects of this unfortunate affair, and I will, with your indulgence, make a few observations of a somewhat general character before resuming my seat. The facts of the case are both simple and clear. Last year Mr Harrison, Accountant General of Bombay, and a prominent member of the Indian Civil Service started a movement at the head of which he eventually placed himself, and with which he got the Commissioner of Police and the Collector of Bombay to identify themselves. The definite and avowed object of this movement was, not to ensure the return of the sixteen best candidates available at the Justices' Election—for that would have been a different thing—but first and foremost to exclude Sir Pherozechah Mehta—not from the Corporation necessarily, that was impossible as long as there were men like my friend Mr Dixit<sup>1</sup> in our public life—but from the list of Justices' representatives, and, secondly, to extend the ban of exclusion even to those candidates for election who were not prepared to be parties to Sir Pherozechah's exclusion. What men were actually returned to the Corporation was a matter of small importance in the eyes of the Caucus so long as Sir Pherozechah was kept out and so long as no one who did not actively support his exclusion was allowed to come in. And thus the Caucus came to oppose even those old and tried counsellors who more often were found in the past to be ranged against Sir Pherozechah than on his side, simply because they could not so far forget what was due to his magnificent record of municipal work as to be parties to his proposed exclusion.

Now, gentlemen, a movement so deliberately personal and engineered by high officers of Government is a serious matter, and I have tried my best to find out what justification has been urged by its promoters in its favour. The only reasons advanced in justification of the Caucus movement have been first that Sir Pherozechah had attained too great a predominance in the Corporation, and secondly, that this predominance was not always used in the best interests of the city. Now, as regards the first reason I do not think that, taken by itself, it deserves any real value being attached to it. A man with

<sup>1</sup> Member, Bombay Legislative Council

the great, the transcendental abilities of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, placing those abilities freely and unreservedly at the disposal of his city for nearly forty years, is bound to attain a position of unrivalled predominance in any Corporation and in any country. That such a man should tower head and shoulders above his fellow-men after such a record, is only to be expected, and those who complain of this quarrel with the very elements of our human nature. Such predominance implies deep gratitude on the part of those to whose service a great career has been consecrated, joined to that profound confidence in the wisdom and judgment of the leader, which goes with such gratitude. Sir Pherozeshah's position in the Bombay Corporation is no doubt without a parallel in India, but there is a close parallel to it in the mighty influence exercised by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, and is not dissimilar to the position occupied by Lord Palmerston for many years in Whig England, and later by the great Gladstone in the counsels of the Liberal party.

As regards the second reason, if there was really anything in it, it would of course deserve more consideration. But what are the things charged against Sir Pherozeshah in this connection ? As far as I have been able to ascertain, they are two in number : one is, that when Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> returned to India a second time as Viceroy, Sir Pherozeshah imported Congress politics into the question about the Corporation presenting an address of welcome; and secondly, that he got the Corporation to go back to Bombay Time after Standard Time had been adopted by that body. Now, admitting for the sake of argument all that the Caucus party has urged in these two matters, what are these little differences of opinion compared with the glorious record of Municipal work standing to Sir Pherozeshah's credit and extending over an unbroken period of thirty-eight years ? But, as a matter of fact, even in these two matters, Sir Pherozeshah's action has had the support and approval of an overwhelming majority of the citizens of Bombay.

As regard the address to Lord Curzon, the responsibility for whatever unpleasantness was caused at the time in the matter, rested not on Sir Pherozeshah but on those gentlemen who, really from political motives, thrust that question on the Corporation. It was well known that widely divergent views were entertained about Lord Curzon's first administration. His re-appointment was only a technical matter, and in view of the intensity of feeling against him, the proposal to present a fresh address of welcome should never have been brought forward. When, however, it was brought forward, those who feared during the second Viceroyalty only an aggravation of the harm that had been done during the first, had no choice left to them but to resist the proposal. It was no longer a question of a mere courteous greeting, such as the Corporation always offers to a new Viceroy on his first arrival in India. But even here, instead of opposing the proposal outright, Sir Pherozeshah, who is the one man among us who is anxious to meet the other side as far as

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.



possible half-way on every occasion, allowed his love of conciliation to carry him farther in the direction of compromise than those who generally worked with him cared to go. And eventually he even served on a Committee which was entrusted with the work of drafting the address.

### *Bombay Time*

As regards the question of Standard Time and Bombay Time, if the Chamber of Commerce and the Port Trust could alter their resolutions under official pressure, I do not see why it should be such a crime for the Corporation also to change its resolution in accordance with popular feeling. This is a matter in which, as the Government of Sir James Fergusson<sup>1</sup> had to admit after a year's struggle about twenty-five years ago, the wishes of the people of Bombay must be allowed to prevail. And, speaking in this Madhava Baug where a great meeting was held last year on the subject, it is not necessary for me to point out that Sir Pherozezshah's action in this matter has been in consonance with the wishes and the feelings of the vast population of this great city. It is interesting to note in this connection that Dr. Katrak, the champion of Standard Time in the last Corporation, received but short shrift at the hands of the Caucus, in spite of his services to the cause of Standard Time, simply because he would be no party to Sir Pherozezshah's rejection by the Justices!

But, gentlemen, it has been said that the three officers concerned in this affair acted in this matter in their private capacity only, and that they dealt with Sir Pherozezshah precisely as they would deal with any public leader in England. Surely, the absurdity of this contention is so obvious that it should not be necessary to waste many words on it. Will those who use this argument tell us what differences of principle in regard to Municipal administration or the interests of the city divide Mr. Harrison and his Caucus from Sir Pherozezshah and those who work with him, that these differences might be likened to those that distinguish Liberals from Conservatives in England? The only thing that is really obvious in this affair is the feeling of hostility to Sir Pherozezshah personally that has inspired the conduct of the promoters of the Caucus movement. It may be that members of the Civil Service cannot bear to be in a position of comparative insignificance in assemblies composed mainly of Indians and to see non-official Indians towering above them, for in the garden of bureaucracy there is no room for tall non-official poppies. But, if this should be so, the only proper course for these men is to withdraw from these assemblies instead of using their official position and forming unjustifiable combinations to strike at the influence of towering individuals.

When Mr. Harrison started the movement to oust Sir Pherozezshah Mehta from the position held by him now for so many years, I wonder if he ever stopped to enquire if it was quite fair thus to deny to a man of Sir Pherozezshah's abilities and seniority even the small scope for work that he possessed in the

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 117.

Corporation of Bombay. We have been told again and again that our Municipal and Local Bodies are intended to be a school for us for learning the art of self-government. Surely members of the Indian Civil Service, who have a monopoly of all administrative power in the country, need not grudge to Indians possessing ability and character not less high than their own, these small fields that alone have so far been thrown open to them. I wonder, also, if Mr. Harrison, before he thought of contesting the leadership of the Corporation with Sir Pherozeshah, asked himself if he, or any other member of his Caucus or all of them put together, had rendered to the Corporation even a fraction of the great services which Sir Pherozeshah Mehta has rendered during his long and distinguished career. However, I have no wish to dwell further on this aspect of the question.

### *Private Capacity of Officials*

The argument that Mr. Harrison and the two other officers acted in this affair merely in their private capacity is one which, in my opinion, is not entitled to any weight. How can men who have the power to make and unmake Justices of the Peace take sides in a hotly contested election, without letting this power interfere with the freedom of election of other Justices? Just imagine the District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police forming a Caucus in the mofussil to manage Municipal or District Board elections and then quietly claiming that they had done this in their private capacity. The whole question is so important and the future course of local self-government so much bound up with it, that I trust it will receive earnest consideration at your hands today, and that we shall not rest in this matter till Government officers as a class are not only forbidden to form combinations, but also are themselves expressly disqualified for election at the hands of popular constituencies.

One word more and I have done. Gentlemen, I feel bound to say—and I say it with regret—that the Bombay Government has not come well, at any rate, so far, out of this affair. It will not do for the Government, Nelson-like, to put the glass to the blind eye and say that it knew nothing of what had been going on. The intense excitement caused by the activity of the Caucus, the extraordinary and unparalleled unanimity with which Indian papers of all shades of opinion were writing day after day and week after week, should have impressed on the Government the necessity of its pulling up its officers promptly before harm had been irrevocably done. However, nothing was done to discourage the mischievous zeal of the Caucus, and when the day of election arrived, it was found that all officers of the Government, high and low—all, with the exception of the very highest,—were there at the place of election to vote solid for the Caucus ticket, and to support the Caucus actively in other ways, and when three Additional Members of the Bombay Legislative Council wrote formally to the Bombay Government to represent the state of public feeling, and to request an open inquiry into what had taken place, offering to

adduce evidence in support of their statements, an amazingly curt reply was sent to these gentlemen, as much as to say that their letter was an impertinence, and that the officials in the Government could not be expected to hear complaints against their brother officials in the Caucus!

Further, the astounding plea was advanced that the wise and salutary prohibition against Government officers influencing popular elections applied to Legislative Council elections and not to Municipal elections. One would have thought that, after the fierce storms of indignation that swept over Bombay after the day of the election, the Government would have recognized better the necessity of a strictly impartial attitude on its part in all subsequent developments. But what are we to think of the appointment of Mr. Suleman Abdul Wahed as a nominee of the Government on the new Corporation? This gentleman, who was practically coerced by the Caucus to join them, who had no wish of his own to come forward as a candidate, who was declared disqualified for membership in a Court of Law, is included by Government among its own nominees at the first opportunity. Well, all I can say is, that if the Government had wanted to confirm the unfortunate impression in the public mind that its sympathies were with the Caucus in this deplorable affair, it could not have taken a more effective step than this to do so. Gentlemen, I fear we have had enough indication of the attitude of the Bombay Government in this matter, and I think we are justified in not waiting further for redress at its hands. You are now going up to the Government of India, which, let us hope, will deal with the question in a spirit of greater regard for the requirements of justice and fair play, and with a higher sense of responsibility towards the freedom, purity and independence of popular elections. It may be that even here motives of official prestige may come in the way, as has so often happened in the past, of the right thing being done, or rather of the wrong thing being set right. But let us not anticipate evil unnecessarily. Things are bound to take their appointed course, and all we owe to ourselves in these matters is to strive our best according to our lights and our opportunities.

## SURAT CONGRESS DEBACLE

### *Gokhale's Refutation of the Extremist Version*

*The Congress session which was held at Surat during the 1907 Christmas had to be suspended because of disorderly conduct of a section of the delegates. In that context Gokhale issued a press statement on January 8, 1908, designed to refute the misstatements concerning himself in the statement put out by the rowdy section. Gokhale's press statement ran as follows :*

The Extremists' version<sup>1</sup> of what occurred at Surat, which was under preparation, has at last been published. It is full of gross misstatements, some of which concern me personally, and these, with your permission, I would like to set right in your columns.

#### *President's Election*

1. The version says : " It was cleverly arranged by the Hon. Mr. Gokhale to get the (Reception) Committee to nominate Dr. R. B. Ghose<sup>2</sup> to the office of President, brushing aside the proposal for the nomination of Lala Lajpat Rai. " <sup>3</sup> Dr. Ghose had been nominated for the office of President by all the Provinces consulted, except Berar. The overwhelming preponderance of opinion in the Reception Committee at Surat was also in his favour. The reason why I attended the meeting of the Reception Committee at which the nomination took place was that rowdyism had been threatened to make its proceedings impossible as at Nagpur unless the proposal of the Extremists to elect Lala Lajpat Rai was accepted. The Reception Committee had barely a month at its disposal for making the required preparations, and any hostility to it on the part of a section, however small, would have meant abandoning the Congress session at Surat. I went there as Joint General Secretary of the Congress in the interests of harmony, and for the time, my appeal to those who wanted to bring forward Lala Lajpat Rai's name proved effective. The harmony brought about lasted till Mr. Tilak's emissaries from Nagpur repaired to Surat and stirred up trouble about a week after the meeting of the Reception Committee.

#### *Reasons Against Lajpat Rai's Presidentship*

2. I am charged with " brushing aside the proposal for the nomination of

<sup>1</sup> The Extremists' version, among other things, charged the Bombay Moderate leaders with trying somehow or other to return " to their old position regarding ideals and methods of political progress in India " as against the spirit of the resolutions passed at the Calcutta Congress in 1906. This and their other contentions are set forth in *their own language* and answered *seriatim* by Gokhale in his reply.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 21.

Lala Lajpat Rai " on the ground that ' we cannot afford to flout the Government at this stage The authorities would throttle our movement in no time ' This unscrupulous distortion of stray sentences from a private conversation, taken apart from their context, has now been passed to such lengths that it is necessary to put aside the feeling of delicacy that has hitherto restrained me in the matter The conversation was with two Extremist gentlemen of Surat with whom I discussed the situation at some length prior to the meeting of the Reception Committee on the 24th November I pointed out to these gentlemen the unwisdom of bringing forward Lala Lajpat Rai's name for the Presidentship of the Congress, and thus I did on three grounds

First, that, with only a month at the disposal of the Reception Committee for making arrangements which, in other places had taken at least three to four months, any division among the workers at Surat was most undesirable as it was sure to hamper the progress of their work

Secondly, that there was absolutely no chance of their carrying their proposal about Lala Lajpat Rai, their strength being only five or six out of about two hundred who were expected to attend that afternoon meeting, and that the rejection of Lala Lajpat Rai's name would only be a painful and wanton humiliation for him, and

Thirdly and lastly, that though Lala Lajpat Rai had been personally restored to freedom, the larger question of principle involved in his deportation had yet to be fought out, and it would best be fought out by keeping up the feeling of the country united and intact behind him, and that this feeling was sure to be divided if one section of the Congress tried to run him as a party candidate I next pointed out that there were other ways in which we could all honour Mr. Lajpat Rai, and then I added " if your object is simply to flout the Government, I can understand your proposal " To this one of the gentlemen said ' Yes, even if we do nothing else, we want to show that we are prepared to flout the Government ' I thereupon said ' I don't believe in such flouting The Congress must, of course, express condemnation of Government measures, when necessary, but it has other important work to do We cannot do without the help and co operation of Government in many matters at our present stage '

The conversation then turned to what our goal should be, and what the Congress should try to do And the gentleman in question, a young man who has only recently returned from England, urged on me his view that the Congress should work for absolute independence, and that it should try to teach people of the country to hate the present foreign Government as much as possible It was in reply to this that I said ' You do not realise the enormous reserve of power behind the Government If the Congress were to do anything such as you suggest, the Government will have no difficulty in throttling it in five minutes ' It is out of this conversation that the story which has been kept going for some time past with a hundred variations has been concocted There were about twenty people present when the above conversation took place

*Drafting the Resolutions*

3. "The Hon. Mr. Gokhale was entrusted by the Reception Committee at its meeting held on the 24th November 1907, for nominating the President, with the work of drafting the Resolutions before the Congress."

This is not correct. No Resolution whatever was passed in the matter at the meeting of the Reception Committee. About the beginning of December, when I went to Bombay from Poona, I was informed by one of the Secretaries of the Reception Committee, Mr. Manubhai Nanabhai, that the Working Committee had decided to ask me to undertake the drafting of the Resolutions to be laid before the Subjects Committee. I was at that time rushed with other work, and so I suggested that the draft should, in the first instance, be prepared by either Mr. Manubhai himself or by his colleague, Mr. Gandhi, and that I would then touch them up if required. Mr. Gandhi wrote back at once to say that he could not undertake the work as he had no time. Mr. Manubhai began to collect the material necessary for drafting the Resolutions, but he was so terribly overworked that he too could not give any time to the actual work of preparing the drafts, and at last about the 15th December, he told me that I should have to do the whole work in that respect myself.

4. "Neither Mr. Gokhale nor the Reception Committee supplied a copy of the draft Resolutions to any delegate till 2-30 p.m. on Thursday, the 26th December." This was due to the fact that printed copies were not till then available. On the 5th December, I settled the headings of the Resolutions in Bombay but I could get no quiet there for the work of drafting, and so I went to Poona on the 19th December to prepare the drafts. It was by no means easy work. The Resolution that gave the greatest trouble was about the proposed reforms. I wrestled with it as well as I could in Poona, but I could not produce a satisfactory draft when I arrived in Surat on the morning of the 24th. The draft Resolution on the proposed reforms was still not ready. I then gave the other drafts to Mr. Gandhi, Secretary of the Reception Committee, in charge of this work, who immediately sent them to the press.

For the draft on the Reform proposals I asked for a day more. There were, however, a thousand things to distract one's attention, and though I gave to the draft all the time I could spare on the 24th and the morning of the 25th, I was not able to finish it. So, with much regret, I asked Mr. Gandhi to get the other drafts printed leaving a blank in the place of the resolution on Reform proposals. Now Surat is a small place and its printing resources are not equal to those of Calcutta, Bombay or Madras, and the press took a day to give printed copies of the drafts to Mr. Gandhi. It was only when I went to the pandal at 2-30 p.m. on the 26th that I learnt from Mr. Gandhi that copies had arrived from the press, and the first printed copy I myself procured from Mr. Gandhi to pass on to Mr. Tilak<sup>1</sup> who had just then asked Mr. Malvi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman, Reception Committee, Surat Congress.

for a copy. The copies were available in good time for the deliberations of the Subjects Committee which, in the usual course, was expected to sit that afternoon for whose use alone the drafts have always been prepared.

Three things must here be noted. First, though the draft Resolutions have, in previous years, been published beforehand, whenever there has been time to do so, it is not true that they have always been so published. Last year, for instance, at Calcutta, some of the draft Resolutions were not ready till the last minute, and this, in spite of the fact that our Calcutta friends had much more time at their disposal than the one month in which Surat had to make its preparations.

Secondly, never before in the history of the Congress was an attempt made, as at Surat, to attach an absurdly exaggerated importance to the draft Resolutions. Every one knows that these drafts bind nobody, and that they are merely material laid before the Subjects Committee for it to work upon. I don't remember a single Congress at which the Subjects Committee did not make important and sometimes even wholesale alterations in the drafts placed before it by the Reception Committee. The final form in which Resolutions have been submitted to the Congress has always been determined by the Subjects Committee and the Subjects Committee alone.

Thirdly, no Reception Committee has ever in the past merely reproduced the Resolutions of the previous Congress on its agenda paper for the Subjects Committee. The Calcutta Reception Committee of last year did not merely reproduce the Benares Resolutions, neither did the Benares Committee reproduce the Bombay Resolutions. Every Reception Committee has exercised its own judgment as to the wording of the draft Resolutions, and the Surat Committee, or those who were working for it, were merely following the established practice when they prepared their own drafts.

5 "While Mr. Malvi was reading his speech, Mr. Tilak got a copy of the draft Resolutions, which he subsequently found were published the very evening in the *Advocate of India* in Bombay, clearly showing that the reporter of the paper must have been supplied with a copy at least a day earlier." The reporter must have procured a copy from Mr. Gandhi as soon as copies arrived from the press and must have wired the Resolutions to his paper, or it is possible that he may have obtained a proof from the press before copies were printed. Certainly, no printed copies were available to me till I went to the pandal on the 26th. I wanted to give a copy to Lala Lajpat Rai that morning, but could not do so as no copies had arrived from the press till then.

#### *Wording of Resolutions*

I now come to the wording of the draft Resolutions.

Sir, coming to the wording of the draft Resolutions, I would like to point out at the outset that the cry set up by Mr. Tilak in connection with these drafts was his third attempt to discredit the Surat Congress since the middle of November.

He began by denouncing the change of venue from Nagpur to Surat and by misrepresenting, beyond all recognition, the proceedings of the All-India Congress Committee which decided upon the change and this without even the excuse of ignorance, since he was personally present at the meeting of the Committee and knew exactly what had taken place.

When he found that he could not make much impression on the country by these attacks, he played his second card. He started his agitation to have the election of Dr. Ghose set aside in favour of Lala Lajpat Rai. In this, however, he was foiled by Lala Lajpat Rai's own letter which put an effective extinguisher on the agitation.

Then the cry was raised that it was the intention of the Reception Committee to drop certain resolutions altogether this year. The ball was set rolling by a telegram from Poona to certain Madras and Calcutta papers about a week before this meeting of the Congress that "the Reception Committee had made up its mind to omit certain resolutions from its agenda paper and that there was intense indignation in the Nationalist circles" in consequence. This manufacture of "Nationalist indignation" was pushed forward so energetically that, when I went to Bombay on the 22nd December, I found a considerable amount of feeling stirred up in certain quarters against the Reception Committee on this account. On that day I met Lala Lajpat Rai and he asked me what the truth was about the resolutions in question. I told him that the resolutions were all there with slight verbal alterations made in one or two of them to remove ambiguity and that the Subjects Committee would decide in what form they should finally be submitted to the Congress. I understand that Lala Lajpat Rai communicated the substance of this conversation that same evening to Mr. Tilak. In spite of this communication, Mr. Tilak definitely and deliberately stated at the Extremists' Conference at Surat on the 24th December, that the Reception Committee had decided to omit some resolutions and this naturally caused great excitement among the delegates assembled. Mr. Gandhi, the local Secretary in charge of the resolutions, came to know of this in the evening and he immediately issued a Press Note contradicting Mr. Tilak's statements as wholly unfounded.

But the cry was kept up the whole of the next day, i.e. the 25th. On that day, in the afternoon, Lala Lajpat Rai, who was going to visit the Extremist Camp, asked me if he might personally assure the leaders on that side that they were under a misapprehension about the resolutions and that they would find them all on the agenda paper when it arrived from the press. I readily agreed and Lala Lajpat Rai went and gave the assurance that same evening. I addressed about 200 delegates in the Madras tent of the Congress camp, especially for the purpose of removing the misapprehension and there I not only assured them that the resolutions were all on the agenda paper, but also mentioned the exact verbal alterations that had been made. About 11 P. M. that night I met Babu Ashwini Kumar Dutt of Barisal, at the President's residence and I repeated to him what I had told the Madras delegates and he



expressed himself satisfied. The next day, i.e. on the 26th, on going to the pandal as soon as I heard of the copies having arrived from the press, I procured and gave one to Mr Tilak, as I have mentioned earlier. The Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya<sup>1</sup> was sitting by Mr Tilak at the time and I heard it afterwards from him that he asked Mr Tilak if he was satisfied that the resolutions were all there and Mr Tilak had to admit that it was so. Only the slight verbal alterations that had been made would have to be amended.

And now as regards the wording of the four resolutions

### *Self Government*

(a) Taking Self Government first, the Extremist version says at the Calcutta Congress, under the Presidentship of Mr Dadabhai Naoroji, it was resolved that the goal of the Congress should be Swaraj on the lines of the Self Governing British colonies. This is not accurate. The word Swaraj was not used in any of the resolutions of the Congress last year though it was used by Mr Dadabhai in his own speech. Neither was there any mention of the goal in any of last year's resolutions. What had been done last year was to prefix a preamble about Self Government to certain specific proposals for reform and the preamble was in these words: "This Congress is of opinion that the system of government obtaining in the Self Governing colonies should be extended to India and that, as steps leading to it, it urges that the following reforms should be immediately carried out." Now a reference to this year's draft resolutions will show that the whole of this resolution, preamble and all, was reproduced by the Reception Committee on the agenda paper with only a slight alteration in one of the clauses, rendered necessary by the appointment of two Indians to the Secretary of State's Council. Mr Tilak, however, compares last year's resolution on Self Government, not with this year's draft resolution on the same subject, but with the preamble to another draft resolution, that of the constitution of the Congress and he charges the Reception Committee with a direct attempt to tamper with the ideal of Self Government on the lines of Self Governing colonies, as settled at Calcutta. Now the portion of the preamble to the proposed constitution referring to Self Government was as follows: "The Indian National Congress has, for its ultimate goal, the attainment, by India, of Self Government similar to that enjoyed by other members of the British Empire and a participation by her in the privileges and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with the other members." This is interpreted by Mr Tilak as meaning that the goal of Swaraj on the lines of Self Governing colonies, as settled last year, was to be given up and in its stead Self Government similar to that enjoyed by other members (not necessarily self governing) of the British Empire was to be set up as the ultimate goal. I should have thought it incredible that any one with any pretension to a knowledge of practical politics could put such an atrocious misconstruction

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 76

on the preamble of the draft constitution, but for the fact that Mr. Tilak has actually done it. Whoever talks of the form of Government obtaining in the Crown colonies or Dependencies of the British Empire as Self-Government ? Whoever talks of their participating in the privileges of the Empire ?

In this connection, I would like to observe that it is most curious that Mr. Tilak should charge me with a desire to abandon the idea of Self-Government, as in the British colonies, being the goal of our aspirations. Ever since I began to take an active interest in the national affairs this has been a part of my political faith. In the prospectus of the Servants of India Society which was started in June 1905, I have mentioned the goal in clear and explicit terms. "Self-Government on the lines of English colonies," the prospectus says, "is our goal." From the presidential chair of the Congress at Benares in December 1905, I declared the same thing. "The goal of the Congress," I then stated, "is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves and that, in course of time, a form of Government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the Self-Governing colonies of the British Empire." In 1906, in a Paper read before the East India Association in London, on 'Self-Government for India,' I elaborated the same idea. On the other hand, Mr. Tilak has not always known his own mind in this matter. After the Benares Congress, Mr. Shyamji Krishnavarma denounced me in his *Indian Sociologist* for my idea of Self-Government on colonial lines and later on Mr. Tilak following, Mr. Shyamji's lead joined in that denunciation in his *Kesari*. Last year, however, Mr. Tilak veered round to the position that the goal of our political work was of equality for the Englishman and Indian in the British Empire, but this year again at the Extremists' Conference he coquetted with the views of the Bengal School of Extremist politicians and yet it is Mr. Tilak who attributed to me a desire to alter the resolution of last year on this subject.

### Swadeshi

(b) As regards Swadeshi, there never was the least intention to alter a single word in last year's resolution and it was by a mere accident that the words, "even at some sacrifice," happened to be left out in the Reception Committee's Draft. It happened this way. The report of the Calcutta Congress was not out when the draft resolutions were prepared. So, for the text of last year's resolutions I had to rely on a newspaper file. Now, the only file I had with me containing those resolutions was of the journal *India* which had published all the resolutions of last year, in its issue of 1st February 1907. As no change of even a word was contemplated in the resolution on Swadeshi, I had got one of my assistants merely to copy it from the *India* and include it among the drafts. Unfortunately the text as published in the *India* was defective and did not contain the words, 'even at some sacrifice', as a reference to the issue of that journal of 1st February 1907, will show. And the omission, perfectly unintentional, remained unnoticed till the meeting of the

informal Conference which followed the Convention when the words which had been left out were at once restored. It is unnecessary to say that they would have been similarly restored, if the Agenda paper had gone as usual to the Subjects Committee for consideration.

### *Boycott*

(c) In the resolution on Boycott, the only verbal alteration made was to substitute the words "the boycott of foreign goods resorted to in Bengal" for the words "the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal" and the resolution was placed under the Partition as the Boycott approved was "by way of protest against the Partition". The change in the wording had been rendered necessary by the unfair and unjustifiable attempt made by an Extremist leader from the Congress platform last year and by Mr. Tilak and others in the Press, throughout the year, to construe the phraseology employed last year as approving a universal Boycott of all forms of association with the Government.

### *National Education*

(d) In regard to National Education, the slight alteration made was only with the object of improving the phraseology without altering the meaning in any way. It must be mentioned here that the wording adopted last year on this subject had not been considered in the Subjects Committee, there being no time for doing so. In last year's resolution, the word National appeared three times, National Education, on National Lines, and under National Control. It appeared to me that the words, 'System of National Education suited to the requirements of the country' and 'Independent of Government' really expressed all that had to be expressed and, that this phraseology was more restrained and more in accord with what was being actually attempted in different parts of India.

It will thus be seen that in drawing up its draft resolutions on the four subjects, the Surat Committee had not intended or attempted any alteration in meaning though verbal changes had been made here and there to remove ambiguity or to improve the phraseology. I have already pointed out that, in making such changes, it was only following the practice of previous years. Moreover, as I have stated earlier, these were only drafts that bound nobody and the Subjects Committee would have determined the final form in which they were to be submitted to the Congress. All storm raised in connection with them was really more to discredit the Surat Committee than for furthering any national interests, real or fancied.

### *Attempts at a Compromise*

The Extremist statement speaks of certain attempts made by certain gentlemen to arrange a compromise and it mentions three gentlemen as having undertaken to speak to me—Lala Lajpat Rai, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee and Mr. Chunilal D. Suraya. Of these, Mr. Chunilal never saw me in any such

connection. Lala Lajpat Rai had a brief talk with me. It was on the 25th December, in the evening at the Railway Station when we had gone there to receive the President, about a proposal made by Mr. Tilak that five men on his side and five men on the other should meet together and settle the wording of the resolutions. I pointed out to Mr. Lajpat Rai that it was the business of the Subjects Committee to settle the wording and that a committee such as Mr. Tilak suggested had never been appointed before. Moreover, it was easy for Mr. Tilak, whose followers were meeting in a Conference day after day, to *nominate five men to represent his side. But amidst the excitement and bitterness of feeling then prevailing, what five men, I asked, could claim the authority or undertake the responsibility to act in the name of the other delegates and I said to him, "let the Subjects Committee meet tomorrow and let us see if any differences remain to be adjusted."* And, if any remain, you can make this proposal to the Subjects Committee. Lala Lajpat Rai saw the force of this and did not press the suggestion further. Mr. Surendranath Banerjee mentioned to me on the opening day of the Congress, just a few minutes before we went to the Pandal, that he had had a conversation that morning with Mr. Tilak and that Mr. Tilak had said to him that if he (Mr. Banerjee) and myself guaranteed the passing of the four resolutions in the same form as last year, there would be no trouble in connection with the President's election. I pointed out to Mr. Banerjee how Mr. Tilak had shifted his ground, how, till the previous evening, the cry was for an assurance that the four resolutions would be on the agenda paper and how he now demanded a guarantee that they would be passed in the same form as last year, and I said, "it is outrageous that Mr. Tilak should make such a demand and, threaten us now with trouble. How can any individual member with any sense of responsibility guarantee what would be done by the Subjects Committee not yet appointed or by a Congress of sixteen hundred delegates ! These men denounce us in one breath for autocracy and, in the next, they ask us to take upon ourselves such an impossible responsibility." The conversation then ended. Before passing away from this point, I should like to contradict here, in the most emphatic manner possible, the report to which such wide currency has been given, that Mr. Tilak tried three times at Surat to see me and that every time I declined to see him. There is not a word of truth in this report. Mr. Tilak never came or gave me to understand directly or indirectly that he wanted to meet me at Surat. He never wrote to me or sent me word with any one to express such a desire. He never came to my place and, to my knowledge, he never tried to meet me anywhere else.

#### *Tilak's Move for Adjournment*

Only one matter in the Extremists' statement concerns me personally. It is the version that it gives of what took place first between Mr. Malvi and Mr. Tilak and then between Dr. Ghose and Mr. Tilak, when Mr. Tilak came to the platform to move the adjournment of the Congress. This version is in direct conflict

with the official version issued immediately after the break up of the Congress, over the signatures of Dr Ghose, Mr Malvi, Mr Wacha, and myself. Now, all the four of us heard every word of the conversation that took place between Mr Tilak on one side and Mr Malvi and Dr Ghose on the other. On the other hand, though the Extremist version is signed by five of the gentlemen, four of the five were not on the platform and could not have heard a syllable of what was said. The conflict between the two versions thus means that the word of us four is against the word of Mr Tilak and there I am content to let it stand.

Here I must close and I would do so with one observation. The Reception Committee of Surat had not departed in a single particular from the established practice of the last twenty two years. It had made its arrangements for the holding of the Congress and for the comfort of the delegates in the usual way. It had prepared the agenda paper for the Subjects Committee in the usual way. It had selected the President under a special rule adopted by the Congress itself last year. Having made these preparations in the course of a single month for which cities like Calcutta and Bombay have taken three to four months, having turned its nights into days for the purpose, it waited for the Congress meeting and conducting its deliberations in the usual way. On the other hand, all the innovations were on Mr Tilak's side. He set up a separate camp of his own followers. He harangued them daily about the supposed intentions of the Reception Committee and the high handedness of imaginary bureaucracy in the Congress. He made from day to day wild and reckless statements some of which it is difficult to characterize properly in terms of due restraint. He created a pledge bound party to vote with him like a machine, whatever the personal views of individual delegates might be. He demanded guarantees from individual members on the other side, unheard of in the history of the Congress. On the first day some of his followers, by sheer rowdyism, compelled the sitting to be suspended. On the second, when the sitting was resumed there was no expression of regret forthcoming for the discreditable occurrence of the previous day and though one day out of three had been lost, Mr Tilak himself came forward to interrupt the proceedings again by a motion of adjournment. Under the mildest construction this was a move of obstruction, pure and simple, for, as long as the rule under which the Reception Committee had elected Dr Ghose remained unrescinded, there was no possible way to set that election aside on the platform. Mr. Tilak openly and persistently defied the authority of the Chair. Over the painful incidents that followed, it is perhaps best now to throw a pall. But, in all this, I do not see where the responsibility of the Reception Committee comes in.

# DÉCENTRALIZATION COMMISSION

## *Gokhale's Written Evidence*

*The following is the Statement submitted to the Royal Commission on Decentralization<sup>1</sup> by Gokhale :*

### *Provincial Decentralization*

I am strongly opposed to the present system of excessive centralization of authority in the hands of the Government of India, but I should be even more strongly opposed to any scheme of decentralization which, while it freed the Provincial Governments from a large part of the control exercised at present by the Supreme Government, substituted nothing in place of the control so removed. The main evil of the existing situation is not so much the extent of the control to which Local Governments have to submit in its purely official character and the distance from which it is exercised. But even mere official control, imperfectly exercised from a long distance, is better than no control, and I certainly have no wish to see "petty despotisms," pure and simple, set up in place of the present Provincial Governments. The higher officials of both the Government of India and the Provincial Governments, who carry on the ordinary administration of the country, are drawn from the same Service and may, therefore, be assumed, other things being equal, to be equally competent to deal with finality with matters coming before them. But other things are not equal. The Provincial officials have indeed on their side the advantage of a more intimate knowledge of local conditions and local needs; but the officials of the Government of India may claim a much greater freedom from local prejudices and local prepossessions and a wider outlook, and these are qualities which are of great importance in a country governed as India at present is. The history of the extension of Local Self-Government in this Presidency during Lord Ripon's<sup>2</sup> time and the important modifications that have recently been made in the Famine and Land Revenue policy of the Bombay Government under pressure from above may be cited as fair illustrations. It may be urged that if the seat of final authority is in the Province itself, Provincial public opinion has a better chance of influencing the course of administration. But the tendency to resent criticism, which goes with all absolute power, is bound often to import on the official side an amount of feeling which cannot fail to neutralize the strength and usefulness of public opinion. If it were, therefore, merely a question of shifting the seat of final authority from Calcutta or Simla to Bombay and nothing else, I would prefer existing arrangements to any such decentralization.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.

But it is my hope that the scope of the question before the Commission is a much wider one than this, and it is in this hope that I come forward to advocate a large measure of decentralization. I think a stage has now been reached in this country when in the true interests of the people as well as to arrest the growing unpopularity of the administration, it is necessary to give the representatives of tax-payers some real voice in the conduct of Provincial affairs. And any arrangements made for this purpose should not only be suited to present requirements but should also be capable of a steady expansion so as to meet satisfactorily the growing demands of the future. The existing system is hopelessly ill-adapted to serve this end. The number of Provincial representatives who can have access to the Government of India—at present the final seat of authority in regard to most Provincial matters—must necessarily be most limited. Moreover, their opportunities to bring up Provincial questions before that Government, with any degree of usefulness, cannot but be exceedingly few. It follows, therefore, that the seat of final authority in Provincial matters must be brought down to Provincial headquarters, if popular representatives are to be placed in a position where they may exercise a real and growing influence over the course of Provincial administration. The Secretary of State for India is contemplating at present a reform of Provincial Legislative Councils. There is, however, small scope for a real reform in this direction, unless it is accompanied by a substantial measure of decentralization relieving Provincial Governments of a large part of the control, financial, and administrative, at present exercised over them by the Government of India.

### *Conditions of Decentralization*

To any such decentralization, however, I would attach three conditions. First, the form of Government in all important Provinces should be a Governor, appointed from England, with an Executive Council. I believe in a fresh mind trained in the free atmosphere of English public life, being applied to the problems of Indian administration from time to time. I also think that the higher responsibilities of Government in this country can be better discharged by a Council of three or four persons than by single individuals. Secondly, Provincial budgets should be submitted for full discussion to Provincial Legislative Councils, which, I trust, will shortly be enlarged and made more representative—members being empowered to move amendments and the budgets being required to be passed by the Councils. And thirdly, whenever a certain proportion of the elected members of a Legislative Council, say one-third, send a requisition to the President of the Council asking that a specific matter concerning the Provincial administration should be brought up for discussion before a meeting of the Council, the Council should be summoned to discuss the matter. The second and third conditions aim at providing, as a substitute for a portion of the present control of the Government of India in financial and administrative matters, some sort of

control on behalf of the tax payers in the Province itself, in the shape of a free discussion in the Legislative Council.

### *Scheme of Decentralization*

Subject to these conditions, I would urge the following scheme of decentralization :

I think there should be no divided heads of either revenue or expenditure, but certain heads of revenue with the expenditure under them should be wholly Imperial and the others wholly Provincial. I would thus assign to Provincial Governments independent sources of revenue in place of the grants which they are at present understood to receive from the Government of India. The three major heads of revenue that I would make over to the Provincial Governments are Land Revenue, Excise and Forests. These are intimately connected with the daily life of the mass of the people, and they may appropriately be placed under the exclusive control of Provincial Governments. On the other hand, revenue and expenditure under Opium, Salt, Customs, Assessed Taxes, Stamps, Registration and Tributes from Native States, together with Post, Telegraph, Mint, Railways and Major Irrigation Works, may be treated as wholly Imperial. On this basis of division, the revenues of all the Provincial Governments will be found to exceed their present scale of expenditure, while the reverse will be the case with the Government of India. To make up this deficit of the Supreme Government, the Provincial Governments should make to it fixed annual contributions which should be determined after a careful consideration of the average liability of each Province to famine as also of the need of making increased grants to Local Bodies out of Provincial resources. These contributions, moreover, should be liable to be revised every five or ten years, the revision taking place at a Conference of the Revenue Members of the different Provinces, presided over by the Finance Member of the Government of India. To meet sudden and extraordinary emergencies, the Viceroy should have the power of altering the amounts of these contributions as he may deem necessary, any Local Government feeling aggrieved by such alteration having the right of appeal to the Secretary of State.

For the present, I would confer no powers of taxation on the Provincial Governments, but the question may be reconsidered after sufficient experience has been gained of the working of the new arrangements. Of the three heads of revenue proposed to be made over to Local Governments, the periodical revisions of land revenue, which are really in the nature of enhanced taxation, by whatever name they may be actually called, require to be subjected to a special control, as the Provincial Governments will have an obviously greater interest than hitherto in the increases of revenue resulting from them. I would, therefore, propose that all revisions of settlements should be laid for discussion before the local Legislative Councils, before they are sanctioned by the Provincial Governments.



As regards borrowing powers, these too I am inclined to keep in the hands of the Government of India, at any rate for the present I fear that if the provincial Governments are empowered to borrow separately, it will be impossible to prevent competition among them or between them and the Government of India, and this will necessarily lead to higher rates of interest than at present, involving a loss to the general tax payer I would, however, have a rule, whereby Local Governments should be entitled to claim, where necessary, a share in the total loan annually raised by the Government of India in proportion to their revenues During times of famine, Local Governments, who have exhausted their famine reserve and who find it necessary to borrow, should have the first claim on the borrowing powers of the Government of India

With reference to expenditure, I am against relaxing the present control of the Government of India in the matter of the creation of new appointments, as also about the scales of pay and pension Barring this, I would give Local Governments full power to expend their revenues as they deem best.

#### *Administrative Matters*

So much about financial decentralization Coming now to matters of Administration, the first line of division that suggests itself is that the control of Military and Naval defence, Foreign affairs, Currency, Customs, Post, Telegraphs, Railways, General Taxation, General Legislation and the like should always be directly in the hands of the Government of India, and that the rest of the internal administration of the country should be entrusted to the Provincial Governments In the exercise of the functions so delegated to Local Governments, there should be no interference in matters of detail on the part of the Government of India It is, however, necessary that large questions of policy, even in regard to the internal administration of the country, should be reserved by the Government of India in its hands, so as to ensure a general, but not rigid, uniformity of administration in the different Provinces, as also to initiate reforms, which, if left merely to Local Governments, may not be taken in hand For instance, the Government of India should have the power to prevent wide divergences of policy in different Provinces in dealing with famine or plague or to compel the carrying out of such important reforms as the free and compulsory spread of primary education the separation of judicial from executive functions and so forth Subject to such general control over questions of policy, the Local Governments should have a free hand in matters of Provincial administration

#### *District Decentralization*

I now come to the question of District administration Here too the need of decentralization is manifest, but it must be Decentralization in District Administration accompanied by measures for a larger association of popular representatives with the work of the administration There is no doubt

that, with the multiplication of Central Departments and a steady increase in the control exercised by the Secretariat of the Provincial Government, the position of the Collector, as the head of a district, has considerably deteriorated. There is also no doubt that the people require more prompt government, and more of it, so to say, on the spot. But this object will not be secured by a mere delegation of larger powers to the Collector. The time is gone by when the Collector could hope to exercise — and with beneficial results — a kind of paternal authority over his district. The spread of education, the influence of new ideas, the steadily growing power of the vernacular press make a return to the benevolent autocracy of the Collector of old times impossible. The only remedy lies in carrying a substantial measure of decentralization down to the villages and in building up local self-government from there. It will not do to be deterred by the difficulties of the task or by the possibilities of initial failure. Village Panchayats must be created. Local and Municipal Boards must be made really popular bodies and larger resources than they can command at present made available to them. Last, but not least, District Councils must be formed, whom the Collectors should be bound to consult in all important matters and with whose assistance they may be empowered to deal, with ever-increasing finality, with questions of District Administration on the spot.

### *Village Panchayats*

I first take the Village Panchayats. There are about 26,000 villages in the British districts of this Presidency, of which about 16,000 have a population below 500, about 5,000 more have a population between 500 and 1,000, and the remaining above 1,000. I think in all villages with a population of 500 and over, a Panchayat should be constituted by statute, to consist of five or seven members, and that the villages below 500 should either be joined to larger adjoining villages or grouped into Unions. The personnel of these Panchayats should roughly be composed of the village headman, the Police Patel of the village where he exists separately, the village Munsiff and the village Conciliator, who will now be appointed in all villages as the provisions of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act, requiring their appointment, have been extended to the whole Presidency, and two or three other persons chosen by such of the villagers as pay a minimum land revenue of, say, rupees ten. These Panchayats should be invested with the following powers and functions:

(a) The disposal of simple money claims not exceeding rupees fifty in value. In regard to such claims the decision of the Panchayats should be final, unless gross partiality or fraud is alleged. It may be noted that of the total number of suits annually instituted in this Presidency — about one and half lakhs — fully one-half or 75 thousand are claims not exceeding Rs. 50 in value. The Panchayats may be expected to administer on the spot a kind of simple justice suited to the villagers and this will be far preferable to the expense, the delays and the demoralization of the law courts. Such jurisdiction in civil matters was

exercised by the Panchayats not only under the Maratha Government but even in the early days of British rule in this Presidency. The Panchayats may charge one anna in the rupee on the value of the claims as costs in the suits, the parties being exempted from stamp duty and other fees

(b) Trial of trivial offences, such as petty thefts, where the value of the property stolen does not exceed Rs 10, simple assault, simple hurt, abuse, nuisance, etc.

(c) Execution and supervision of village works

(d) Management of village forests

(e) Distribution of sanctioned allotments of Tagar in the village.

(f) Carrying out measures of famine and plague relief.

(g) Control of village water-supply and sanitation

(h) Supervision of school attendance

(i) Management of cattle-pounds

The funds of the Panchayats should consist of assignments made by the Taluka Board, cost of civil litigation realized, fines and penalties levied locally, realizations from village forests and cattle-pound receipts. As in the case of Co-operative Credit Societies, it may be necessary for the Government to appoint a special officer to start and guide for a time these Panchayats and watch over their working

### *Taluka Boards*

The next rung of the ladder of Local Self-Government after Village Panchayats is Taluka Local Boards. Here the framework already exists, but the existing taluka boards are more or less under official domination and their resources are so meagre that it is not fair to expect the members to feel really interested in their work. The first reform that I would urge in this connection is that Taluka Local Boards should now be made wholly elected bodies. The Mamlatdar should be empowered to attend meetings, when necessary, and the Government should retain in its hands the power of enforcing action, if its advice and warning are disregarded, by suspending a Board temporarily and appointing in its place a small body of nominated members. Only thus will a proper sense of responsibility be developed in these Boards, and any inconvenience that may temporarily arise will, in the end, be more than made up for by the increased efficiency of real Local Self-Government. But a reform of the constitution of the Taluka Boards will be of small value, unless steps are taken at the same time to place increased resources at their disposal. The revenue of these Boards in this Presidency consists at present mainly of such assignments as the District Local Board makes to them out of the proceeds of the one-anna cess or from contributions received from Provincial resources. In Madras, Taluka Boards retain for themselves half the proceeds of the one-anna cess and only the other half goes to the District Local Boards. With us, the District Boards control the entire distribution of the cess-proceeds and after deducting the educational share as also grants to Medical and Veterinary,

they retain for themselves such sums as they think to be necessary and divide the rest among the different Taluka Boards. The result is that the Taluka Boards generally receive much less than one-half the money available for distribution. Thus in the three divisions of the Presidency proper, we find that in the years 1904-1905 and 1905-1906, the amounts retained by the District Boards for themselves out of cess-proceeds, exclusive of grants for educational, medical and veterinary purposes, and those assigned by them to the Taluka Boards were as follows :

Northern Division	{ District Boards 3.23 lakhs Taluka Boards 2.23 lakhs
Central Division	{ District Boards 3.64 lakhs Taluka Boards 1.08 lakhs
Southern Division	{ District Boards 2.38 lakhs Taluka Boards 37 thousand

Again for the year 1904-1905, these figures were :

Northern Division	{ District Boards 2.23 lakhs Taluka Boards 83 thousand
Central Division	{ District Boards 3.53 lakhs Taluka Boards 1.32 lakhs
Southern Division	{ District Boards 2.72 lakhs Taluka Boards 99 thousand

Now, my proposal is that the entire proceeds of the one-anna cess, after deducting the educational share and the medical and veterinary grants, should be placed at the disposal of the Taluka Local Boards and that the District Boards should receive either a share of the Excise revenue or a special contribution from the Provincial Exchequer to cover their loss. At present the Taluka Board and the District Board are what may be called the smaller and the larger unit of local self-government in the districts. Instead of these, if the Village Panchayat and the Taluka Board were made the smaller and the larger unit respectively, that would be more in accord with the limited extent of the resources available, and local self-government would yield far more satisfactory results. The areas of Indian districts are, moreover, so large that the sense of unity of local interests, which is very strong in villages and is fairly strong in talukas and without which successful local self-government is not possible, becomes much too diluted when we reach the district. The average area of a district in the Presidency proper is about four thousand square miles, and of a taluka over four hundred square miles. Those who serve on Taluka Boards may well be expected to be fairly familiar with the conditions and requirements of the different parts of the taluka, but such personal acquaintance cannot reasonably be expected from the members of a District Board with the whole of their district. The latter, therefore, must largely rely on the advice of officers, either of their own or of the Government, and though they

have enough local knowledge and enough sense of local unity to be able to exercise a satisfactory general control over the administration of their affairs, they are not qualified to administer those affairs personally to the same extent to which members of Taluka Boards are qualified. If large local revenues were available for distribution, I should not mind District Boards getting a share and even a substantial share of them. But the resources available being most scanty—not sufficient even for the local needs of the talukas as distinct from those of the district—I think the best plan would be to place them wholly at the disposal of Taluka Boards, thereby giving a real chance to local self-government to attain a fair standard of efficiency. The Taluka Boards should be bound to make small assignments to Village Panchayats in their areas.

As regards the powers of Taluka Boards, I think the provisions of the present Act are sufficiently comprehensive. I would, however, do away with the power which the District Boards possess and which they constantly exercise of altering the budgets of Taluka Boards. I would allow the latter to frame their own budgets within the limits of their resources without any outside interference. I would also empower them to combine with one another for incurring joint expenditure or entertaining joint establishment without the sanction of a higher authority.

### *Municipalities*

What I have said above about the constitution of the Taluka Boards applies equally to Municipalities in District and Taluka towns. I think these bodies should now consist wholly of elected members, the Government retaining in its hands the power to enforce action, if its advice and warning are disregarded by a temporary suspension of these Boards and the appointment in their place of small bodies of nominated members. Unless an undivided responsibility is thus thrown on these Municipalities, risking even initial failure for its sake, these institutions will neither become efficient instruments of local administration nor will they fulfil the higher purpose of serving as seminaries for the education of the people in the art of self-government. Like the Taluka Boards, our Municipalities also suffer from the meagreness of their resources, but except in regard to education and large projects of sanitation and water-supply, it is only fair that they should rely upon themselves. Large projects are, of course, so utterly beyond the capacity of these bodies that their execution is impossible unless substantial grants in aid towards capital outlay are made from Provincial revenues. Also for meeting adequately the growing educational needs of their areas larger assistance from Government is indispensable. As regards powers, the present Act is on the whole sufficient, though here and there small relaxations of present restrictions may be necessary.

### *District Boards*

The case of the District Board is slightly different from that of the Taluka Boards and Municipalities. The area of its jurisdiction is large, and I think it

is an advantage to have the Collector as President, unless non-official gentlemen of position, prepared to undertake regular touring throughout the district, are available for the office. The presence of the Executive Engineer, the Civil Surgeon and the Educational Inspector is also desirable on this Board. I would, therefore, have about one-fourth of its members nominated by the Government, the remaining three-fourths being elected. Each Taluka Board and Municipality in the district should elect one member, the Municipality of the district town having the right to return two. I would also create a special constituency for the whole district with a fairly high franchise to elect five or six members, the electors being graduates of a certain standing, say five years, Government pensioners receiving a pension of Rs. 75 a month or above, landholders paying an assessment of Rs.200 or above, and traders, merchants, and others paying incometax on at least Rs. 2,000 a year. Thus taking Poona, I would have on the District Board 36 members—9 nominated and the remaining 27 elected as follows: 8 by the 8 Taluka Boards, 2 by the Poona City Municipality, 11 by the other Municipalities, one each, and six by the special constituency outlined above. A Board so constituted may be expected to do useful work if steps are taken to place sufficient resources at its disposal. I have already suggested above that the entire proceeds of the one-anna cess, after deducting therefrom the educational share and medical and veterinary grants, should be made over to Taluka Boards and that a portion of the Excise revenue, say 10 per cent, or in its place an equivalent additional grant from Provincial revenues, should be made available to District Boards. The principle of admitting Local Boards to a share in the Excise revenue is not a new one. Until about 30 years ago the one-anna cess was levied on a portion of the Excise revenue, though not on the whole of it. Even today a fixed sum of one and half lakhs appears under contributions from Provincial to Local as 'contribution in lieu of one-anna cess on Excise revenue.' This contract grant was fixed at a time when the Excise revenue of the Presidency had not assumed its present proportions, and the Boards have thereby been deprived of a share in the increase which otherwise would have been theirs. In view of the fact that, in regard to communications at any rate, the District Boards have for the most part to bear a burden which should really fall on the Provincial revenues, it is not an extravagant demand that at least one-tenth of the income from Excise should be handed over to these bodies to enable them to discharge their duties in a satisfactory manner. As regards the powers of these Boards, I think that the present law is on the whole sufficient, though, as in the case of Municipalities, some of the restrictions may have to be relaxed.

#### *District Councils*

I now come to the very important question of District Councils. The three evils of the present system of District Administration are its secrecy, its purely bureaucratic character and its departmental delays. Important questions affecting the interests of the people are considered and decided behind their

backs on the mere reports of officials, only final orders being published for general information as though the people existed simply to obey. The constant references, backwards and forwards, which an excessive multiplication of Central Departments has necessitated, involve long and vexatious delays even in the disposal of petty matters and are a fruitful source of irritation and suffering to simple villagers. The Collector is the chief representative of the Executive Government in a district and to prevent the evils of an uncontrolled exercise of power, he is subjected to a series of checks in his work. These checks are, however, all official, they are all exercised by the members of his own Service, of which he himself as a rule is a fairly senior officer, and though they may serve to prevent gross abuses of power, I fear they are not of much value in promoting efficient administration and they certainly hamper him largely in the prompt discharge of his duties. What the situation requires is not such official checks exercised from a distance, but some control on the spot on behalf of those who are affected by the administration. For this purpose I would have in every district a small Council of non officials, two-thirds of them elected by the non official members of the District Board and one third nominated by the Collector. Thus in Poona, I would have a District Council of 9 members, 6 to be elected by the non-official members of the District Board, constituted as already outlined and the remaining 3 nominated by the Collector of Poona. If such a Council is created I would make it obligatory on the Collector to consult it in all important matters, and I would delegate to him large additional powers to be exercised in association with the Council so that ordinary questions affecting the administration of the district should be disposed of on the spot without unnecessary reference to higher officials. What actual powers should be thus delegated will have to be determined by a Committee appointed specially for the purpose. Roughly, I would classify matters coming before the Collector under four heads

(a) Confidential, (b) Those which must be referred to the Central Government, but in regard to which the Collector must ascertain and forward to the Government the opinion of the District Council, (c) Those which the Collector should dispose of finally if he is able to carry the District Council with him, but which he must otherwise refer to the Central Government; and (d) those which he may decide as he deems best even against the opinion of the District Council.

Confidential matters will necessarily have to be withheld from the District Councils. As regards (b), (c) and (d), I indicate below the nature of the questions that may come under them. It will of course be understood that my object is merely to illustrate what questions, in my opinion, should be dealt with in the different ways proposed and not to give exhaustive lists of such questions.

Matters which may be placed under (b) (1) Legislative proposals, (2) Proposals of revision settlements, (3) Revision of water-rates, (4) Recommendations about remissions of land revenue, (5) Creation of

new Municipalities, (6) Extension of the operation of Acts to new areas, (7) Imposition of punitive Police, and (8) Creation of new posts.

Matters which should come under (c) : (1) Opening, location, and abolition of liquor shops, (2) Suspensions of land revenue, (3) Levy of building fines, (4) City survey proposals. (5) Organization of local supply from forests, (6) Opening of new and closing of old schools, (7) Establishment of Village Panchayats and Unions, (8) Suspension of Taluka Boards, Municipalities, Panchayats and Unions, (9) Creation of Benches of Magistrates, (10) Rules regulating fairs, processions, &c., and (11) Assumption of property under the Court of Wards Act. Matters which may come under (d) : (1) Urgent precautionary measures against plague, cholera, and other epidemics, (2) Measures for preservation of peace, and (3) Measures of famine relief.

I would allow the members to initiate, where necessary, the consideration of such questions or grievances as, in their opinion, should be brought to the notice of the Collector, and I would make the Collector the real head of all the Departments of Executive Administration in his district except in matters which require technical or expert knowledge. It will be seen that the District Councils will be only advisory bodies — advisory in the sense that no resolution of theirs can take effect unless it is accepted by the Collector. If this machinery is brought into existence and if larger powers are then delegated to the Collector, I would have above the latter only one higher authority in the Presidency, viz. the Central Government. This means the abolition of all the Commissionerships except that in Sind. The Collectors will then correspond direct with the Central Government and probably a third member will have to be added to the Executive Council. To enable the Government to exercise general supervision over District Administration, it will be necessary to appoint Inspectors-General, who will tour round the Presidency and do inspection work on behalf of the Government. Expert advisers will also be necessary for those branches of the Administration which require high technical or scientific knowledge. But the only authority from whom the Collectors will receive orders will be the Central Government.

I am confident that the creation of District Councils as suggested above will be attended with beneficial results. The view has been expressed that no such bodies need be called into existence and that the only thing required to meet the necessities of the situation is to delegate larger powers to the Collector. All I can say is that those who tender such advice do not correctly understand the spirit of the times. What is wanted is not a mere increase of official efficiency, assuming that such increase can be secured by following the course proposed. I have already pointed out that a return to the old benevolent autocracy of the Collector is no longer possible and any attempt in this direction will not only fail but will be widely resented. The cry of the people everywhere is that the Car of Administration should not merely roll over their bodies but that they themselves should be permitted to pull at the ropes. Increased proficiency in the vernaculars on the part of District Officers or more



*determined attempts to promote social intercourse are only surface remedies, which will not touch the real root of the evil. We want an interest in the Administration around us. The educated classes are only critics of the Administration today because the Government does not realize the wisdom of enlisting their co-operation. Some people imagine an antagonism between the interests of the educated classes and those of the masses and they hope to fortify themselves by winning the gratitude of the latter as against their unpopularity with the former. This, however, is a delusion of which the sooner they get rid the better. The educated classes are the brain of the country, and what they think today, the rest of the people will think tomorrow. The problem of bringing the Administration into closer relations with the people is essentially a problem of associating the educated classes with the actual work of the Administration. With village Panchayats at the bottom, District Councils in the centre and reformed Legislative Councils at the top, this problem will have been fairly faced so far as the exigencies of the present are concerned.*

## DECENTRALIZATION COMMISSION

### *Gokhale's Oral Evidence*

*Gokhale's oral evidence before the Decentralization Commission was taken in Bombay on Saturday, 7th March 1908, when, besides the chairman, Mr. C. E. H. Hobhouse, M. P., Under-Secretary of State for India, the members named below were present : Sir Frederic Lely, Sir Steyning Edgerley, Mr. R. C. Dutt, Mr. W. S. Meyer and Mr. W. L. Hichens.*

*The following is Gokhale's oral evidence :*

33489 (Chairman) Were you elected as president by the other members of the Poona municipality or were you nominated by Government ?—I was nominated as a member of the municipality, but I was elected President by the members.

33491. You say that owing to the action of the Government of India, certain important modifications have been brought about in provincial administration, more particularly with regard to famine and land revenue; can you illustrate what you mean? — With regard to land revenue, for instance, the contention of the people for a long time was that suspension should be by areas, and that when there was a general failure over a large area, there should be remission without enquiry into every case. The Bombay Government, for a number of years adhered to the individual enquiry system, and it was only under pressure of the Government of India that they ultimately abandoned that system.

33492. Has that system of remission, as insisted on by the Government of India, been, on the whole, successful? — It is comparatively recent but it has given much more satisfaction to the people, and I think it will work better. As regards famine, the Government of Bombay for a long time insisted, as a test, that the people who wanted relief should be prepared to go a long way from their villages to satisfy the Government that they were in need, which caused great hardship, and ultimately under pressure from the Government of India that policy has been abandoned, and works as near the villages as possible have been adopted as the policy.

33493. Have you had any opportunity of seeing how that works in practice? — I have been following what has taken place in the Presidency as a public man, and I have noted that it has given greater satisfaction.

33494. Has it proved not only satisfactory to the people requiring relief, but has it worked well from an economical point of view ?—It must be so, but economically I do not think there would be much difference between the two.

33495. On the whole, therefore, do you consider that the intervention of the Government of India has been judicious in these particulars ?—Yes, but

of course there are cases on the other side also For instance, taking the University Bill of the Government of India, I think if Bombay had stood by itself that Bill would not have been forced upon it The Government of India saw how things were in Calcutta and they generalized from that and forced a measure on the whole country which was resented by the bulk of the people

33496 Then in the case of the Universities Bill, the Local Government was interfered with to its disadvantage? — I do not know that, but it was the Government of India that legislated for the whole country and I am sure if the Bombay Government had been left to itself it would not have legislated on those drastic lines The experience of the Government of India was only derived from Calcutta and they generalized from that and passed the measure for the whole country

33497. So far as Bombay is concerned, has it been injuriously affected by that action? — Not to a large extent, for the reason that our system was really better than the Calcutta system, but the legislation passed was resented in Bombay

33498 It may have been resented but it was not necessarily injurious? — It has been worked well in Bombay up to now but that does not mean that it will always be so worked

33499 Then you say that during times of famine, Local Governments, *who have exhausted their famine reserve and who find it necessary to borrow*, should have the first claim on the borrowing powers of the Government of India, the scheme, which you have outlined, is one by which the Government of India would derive its revenues from moneys allotted to it by the provincial Governments? — Except that some heads of revenue will be purely imperial and will belong to the Government of India as a matter of right

33500 So far as those revenues which attach to it under your scheme, as a matter of right, are only just sufficient to meet its expenditure, against what, under those circumstances, would the Government of India have power to borrow? — The Secretary of State borrows on the security of the revenues of India

33501 Which will expand? — That applies even now Supposing there is no surplus, all the same, the revenues are there, and the Government of India and the Secretary of State borrow, the position will not be altered in any way, except that certain revenues will be assigned to the Government of India, and certain others to the provincial Governments

33502 In your view then will the borrowing powers of the Government of India be as against the assigned revenues? — No, I would allow the Government of India to borrow for all, but as the Government of India's borrowing will be against the total revenues of India and since a portion of those total revenues will belong to the provincial Governments, portions of the total loan should go to them if they want it

33503 Are they to be earmarked against the provincial sources of revenue? — It could not be done in that way, because at present the borrowings are all

against the revenues of India, and unless the Act was altered it could not be done, but in practice it could be worked in this way : Supposing the Government of India borrow in one year 10 crores of rupees; if one-fourth of the revenue has been made over to Local Governments, the Local Governments should have a right, out of the 10 crores, to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  crores, and the question of urgency would determine which Government should get most. What happens now is that the Government of India first takes all the money it wants for itself, and then the Local Governments get a chance.

33504. Against what resources do you propose the Government of India should borrow?—Against the revenues of India as a whole; unless the Act is altered there is no other way.

33505. Although you have deprived them, under your scheme, of certain sources of income which they now enjoy?—I would not put it in that way; both the Supreme and provincial Governments will be sharers in the revenues which are vested in the Secretary of State.

33506. I want to get your point of view?—I would only let the Government of India borrow against the total revenues of all India, but as only three-fourths of the revenues belong to the Government of India and one-fourth to the Local Governments, three-fourths of the loan only should be kept by the Government of India, and the other fourth handed on to the Local Governments.

33507. Would lenders be willing to lend on that security?—I am sure they would; it makes no difference to them.

33508. With regard to the powers of panchayats, you say that in cases of small money claims their decision should be final?—Yes, unless fraud or gross partiality is alleged.

33509. Would that often be alleged in cases where there were relatively large sums in dispute?—Occasionally it might be the case, but the Subordinate Judge to whom the appeal would go would exercise his judgment, and see whether there was reasonable ground for the allegation.

33510. Would you introduce into this possible appeal some provision by which the reasonableness of the appeal should be taken into consideration?—Yes, by the authority to which the appeal is made.

33511. It has been suggested by one or two witnesses that in proceedings before panchayats no pleader or other legal expert should be allowed to take part; would you agree with that?—Yes, I would not have legal experts appearing before panchayats.

33512. Would you debar them from practising before panchayats?—Yes, but when appeals go from panchayats, where partiality or fraud is alleged, I would allow legal assistance.

33513. You suggest, amongst other things, that they should have the management of the village forests; do you mean the waste lands attaching to the forests, or the cultivation of sylvicultural land—what might be regarded as minor forests?—The valuable timber forests I would keep under the depart-

ment, but there are many so called forests which supply grazing and fuel only, and those I would make over to the village communities

33514 In Bombay has the management of these minor forests ever been in the hands of the villagers?— Before the Forest Department was organized the villagers did as they pleased with them. The department has now enclosed as forest land a great deal more area, and since then there has been no chance for the village communities. I would take out of the control of the Forest Department these particular lands, and make them over to the villagers again.

33515 As a matter of fact, in Bombay have there ever been forest areas under the control of village communities?— Before the Forest Department was organized, in many places what is now known as forest was entirely under the control of the villagers.

33516 Did that work well from the point of view of providing the villagers with fuel and grazing?— It is difficult to say, but I know that the department has been saying that the villagers denuded the forests, and that on the whole it was harmful. I would therefore provide for some control, e.g. that the villagers should be bound to take care of trees and so on, but I would give the general management of these areas into the hands of the villagers themselves.

33517. There should be some expert control or direction over the village management?— For minor forests I do not think much expert control is necessary, but only a sort of general control on the part of the village authorities. The mamlatdar might say to the panchayat "The Government will hold you responsible for so much, you must not cut certain trees, you may do as you like with regard to grazing and fuel." There might be some difficulty, but on the whole the system would work well.

33518 Would panchayats be able to carry out any measures with regard to famine and plague relief in villages satisfactorily?— I do not think much is done even now in that respect in the villages. They are left pretty much to themselves, and in any case nothing would be lost by throwing responsibility on them. They would not do much, but neither is much done now. They might carry out general instructions, though I admit it is a very difficult problem.

33519 Might it not be so difficult and dangerous a problem, both in respect to famine and plague, that it would be dangerous to entrust it to a village community?— I do not think so. Famine perhaps stands on a different footing. In regard to famine Government will supply the funds for works to be undertaken, and the works might be handed over to the village panchayats, care being taken that there shall not be more waste than there is at present. With regard to plague, I do not think you can enforce measures very strictly on the village people, they will have to be left to themselves unless there is an improvement in sanitation generally, general instructions might be issued by the Government, and after that I would not interfere with the panchayats.

33520 You say that the taluka Boards should provide the funds both for themselves and for the panchayats, and that the provincial Governments

should find money for the District Boards; but how do you propose to make up the deficiency in the provincial revenues which would arise in that case?— Taking the finances of the country as they are today, I do not anticipate any deficiency on the present scale of expenditure. The Government of India have been getting surpluses of 4 and 5 crores for the last 7 or 8 years, and more money ought to be taken from the Government of India and made over to the provincial Governments on condition that the local bodies are properly financed.

33521. Then according to your scheme District Boards are to raise no cess in the areas over which they rule?— No, the cesses are to go to the taluka Boards.

33522. Is a District Board to have no funds raised in its own area?— Except the tolls and ferries.

33523. Is not that an insignificant item?— It is between 4 and 5 lakhs.

33524. In nearly every country, a District Board, however constituted, raises its own revenue, but under the scheme which you adumbrate it is to receive its revenue from outside sources. Do you suggest that a District Board is not to raise from the area over which it has jurisdiction any sums to meet its own expenditure?— District Board administration is more in the nature of provincial administration; the area is too large, and you cannot enlist local sentiment in the efficient administration of local affairs so far as a whole district is concerned, and many of the responsibilities which have been thrown on the District Boards should really belong to the Local Government. For instance, many of the District Board roads at one time were provincial roads, and they have now been thrown on the Boards, so as to relieve the provincial finances of the burden; the provincial finances should contribute towards their upkeep.

33525. Whatever the reason may be, do you suggest that the District Boards should not rate the district which they administer?— I do. I have an open mind on the subject. I would have an education cess if education was made free and compulsory, and if a cess was necessary. There is already one-third of the one anna cess devoted to education, but I would advocate an additional cess if necessary.

33526. (*Sir Frederic Lely*). You refer to the policy of small works in time of famine; as a matter of fact, has not the famine policy in that respect oscillated a good deal during recent years?— Yes.

33527. At one time the system of large works was fully approved of by the Government of India as being more economical and more efficient?— Yes, but that was a long while ago.

33528. As to the new policy of small works, are you aware that that has been adopted very largely at the instance of local officers?— Yes, I have heard that.

33529. That is to say, it has not come so much from above as from below?— But the Local Governments did not back up the local officers, and the Government of India did.

33530 Is not the inference not that the interference of the Government of India should be encouraged and strengthened, but rather that the Local Governments should be brought nearer its own officers?—That is one way of doing it, but the other element must be also there

33531 Would that not be the really effective way of dealing with the matter?—In some matters it might

33532 In matters of that sort for instance is it not much more desirable that measures should commence from below rather than from Simla which is not likely to know much about them?—On the whole, yes, but a Local Government may listen to Simla when it will not listen to its own officers

33533 Some witnesses have given very decisive replies stating that the old quasi family life of a village has disappeared, would you agree that the village constitution does not exist now?—I would not say that it has disappeared, it is much weaker no doubt but it would tend to become stronger if the panchayat is utilized again

33534 Are your proposals quite irrespective of that fact? You think the village is the natural constituency of the country, and you consider that you can begin with the village as the only basis?—Yes quite irrespective of that

33535 You would propose, as the chief part of the constituency for the election of the panchayat, the villagers who pay a minimum land revenue of say Rs. 10, would you seriously introduce that very modern requirement into an ancient village and merely assess a man's social value or public value according to the amount of money in his pocket?—I would have only two or three members of the panchayat elected in that way, there must be some qualification, and this is the easiest test I can think of

33536 Would not a more popular test in a village be his social influence?—After all, the duties are civic, and I would introduce this element

33537 Would not a general body of the villagers assembled, without regard to their actual property, electing with one voice, or the voice of the majority, the man or men to whom they could most look up, be a more congenial method of election?—I do not think it is practicable any longer

33538 Then you would have the pecuniary qualification?—I think I would

33539 Are not the factions by which many villages are rent the real stumbling block in the way of village self-government?—Yes but they are common to the whole country, they are not confined only to the villages

33540 Would Government be doing right to hand over the affairs of a village however minute they might be, to a faction, without taking measures to counteract the influence of that faction?—I do not think under my scheme it would be handing over power to a faction, it would be handing over power to a body, four of whom would be ex officio men, and only two or three elected, so that it does not mean that all the members will be necessarily from one side

33541 As a matter of fact, does it not often happen that a village is torn into two factions and two only, each led by influential men, one faction being

necessarily superior to the other? That faction, therefore, under your system would obtain the dominant voice in the village. Does Government owe no duty to the other faction?—But all the men would not necessarily be from one faction only.

33542. I am supposing a case of one faction actuated by bitter hostility towards the other, and it gets the upper hand, what steps do you propose Government should take to protect the rest of the village?—I would give the Collector power to suspend a panchayat like that. I do not think anything else is required, and perhaps the very fact of their discharging civic duties jointly might temper those factions.

33543. Would you oblige litigants to refer their disputes to the local panch?—I would.

33544. You would not give them the option of going to the Civil Court?—I would not.

33545. It would be rather hard on a man who belonged to the weaker faction to oblige him to go before men who avowedly had an animus against him?—There would no doubt be cases like that, but some amount of injustice has to be borne in the world under any system.

33546. Are not many matrimonial disputes settled by panchayats now?—Yes.

33547. Would you say justice as a rule is done?—I think on the whole simple justice is done.

33548. Are you not aware of many flagrant cases of injustice?—I have heard so; but I have also heard of injustice being done in the Law Courts.

33549. But that is not, as a rule, intentional injustice?—Probably not.

33550. Do you really think it would be safe to entrust these powers to villages?—I think so; there is some danger, but I would take the risk and try that system.

33551. At the expense of the weaker parties?—In the material interests of the villagers themselves who are ruined by litigation today.

33552. Mention is made of plague relief; is not the question of plague relief a particularly suitable one for treatment by the villagers, especially with regard to such matters as segregation and evacuation of infected houses?—Yes, the villagers would help themselves much better than any official agency.

33553. In fact would you say that the only agency that can turn a man out of his house without friction is the village community, the neighbours?—Yes.

33554. (*Mr. Dutt.*) Is your general position that you recommend a greater degree of independence in provincial administration, subject to a greater amount of popular control?—That is my position, the two parts of my scheme go together.

33555. In granting greater independence to provincial Governments would you make over to them some distinct heads of revenue such as land revenue, excise and forests?—Among the major heads.



33556 That of course would largely increase the present assets of the provincial Governments? — Not largely in every case, but in some cases it would. In Bengal, for instance, the surplus would be very small.

33557 And you would adjust that by a rule that the provincial Governments should make fixed annual contributions to the Government of India? — Yes.

33558 Would such a system make the provincial Governments more independent of the Government of India in the administration of those departments? — I would make them independent in regard to administration.

33559 Would that prevent the Government of India from sometimes initiating reforms in those departments when such reforms were likely to affect revenue? — If the reforms initiated led to a decrease of provincial revenue, that would be a matter for consideration when the fixed grant by the provincial Governments to the Government of India came to be revised. I would then make a *reduction from that grant*, but I would leave power to *initiate reforms* in the hands of the Government of India.

33560 So that you would leave with the Government of India the power it has now of laying down a general policy even though it affected revenue? Yes, that would make no difference.

33561 But if it seriously affected revenue you would leave that to be adjusted at the next settlement? — That is my position.

33562 According to your scheme of village panchayats, you would introduce a panchayat at present in every village with a population of 500 and over? I would try.

33563 I suppose there are something like 10,000 villages of that kind in this province? — Yes.

33564 You have also suggested that a special officer might be employed to start and guide these panchayats and watch over their work? — I think that would be necessary.

33565 Do you propose a special officer for the whole province or for each division or district? — I would have an officer for each division, one officer for a whole Presidency would find too much work to do, but an officer for a division, with special responsibility thrown on the mamlatdar, would perhaps meet the requirements of the case.

33566 Would this officer act in concert and consultation with the mamlatdars? — Yes.

33567 Subject to that would you rather give a free hand to the village communities when once started? — I would.

33568 With regard to your proposal to make over the whole proceeds of the one anna cess to the taluka Boards, you admit that that would leave very little to the District Boards? — Yes.

33569 Do you propose that they should get only the revenue derivable from tolls and ferries? — Those too I would do away with tolls especially.

33570 Would you propose also that certain contributions should be made

by the Government? — Yes, and a part of the excise revenue might be made over to these Boards.

33571. You know that there are some important works which had to be done by the District Boards which cannot be done by the taluka Boards? — Yes.

33572. And you also know that possibly district Boards may hereafter employ their own engineers instead of depending on the Public Works Department; with all this increasing expenditure, would the income which you would assign to them be sufficient to meet all the expenses? — If you assign 10 per cent of the excise, that means in this Presidency 14 lakhs straight off, and that will go some way, especially as the taluka Boards will be able to take care of themselves. The District Boards will mainly look after the larger communications. My point is that the work which the District Boards do now is really the work of the provincial Government.

33573. When, for instance, an engineer is appointed by the District Board, in the interests of the taluka Boards, would you not provide that the taluka Boards should contribute something towards his pay? — I would leave the taluka Boards to manage their own roads from the taluka towns to the villages, and I would not have anything done for them by the District Board; if a District Board employs an engineer of its own it ought to find the money.

33574. Are you aware that most of the important roads are now attended to by the Public Works Department? — Yes.

33575. And that the District Board has to pay a percentage to the Public Works Department which comes to a considerable amount? — Yes.

33576. Therefore it might be advisable for the District Boards, in some cases, to employ their own engineers; in such cases would you leave the District Boards to find the money and not get it from the taluka Boards? — Yes; District Board funds should come mainly out of the provincial revenues; seeing that the distribution of the resources between provincial and local is not quite fair now, I would throw a larger burden on the provincial revenues.

33577. Would you be in favour of allowing taluka Boards to manage their own primary schools instead of leaving them to the management of the Education Department? — Except that I would place the staff under the District Boards or some district authority.

33578. Do you mean the teaching staff? — Yes; there is more contentment in a Service if there is a wider area over which you can shift your men, but barring that I would allow taluka Boards to manage their own school affairs.

33579. But you would expect the taluka Boards to pay? — Yes.

33580. But the appointments and transfers would be in the hands of the District Boards? — Yes. If the educational expenditure has to be increased, I would expect these Boards to make a grant.

33581. Would you expect the taluka Boards to have a large number of aided schools — schools to which the Boards would only contribute a certain monthly stipend — leaving the villagers to maintain them? — We had that type

of school here at one time, but it has well nigh disappeared now, and I do not think it is possible to revive it

33582. Not even in small villages?—It might be done there

33583 Would it be desirable to try?—There are some villages in my own experience where four or five or six families have grouped their resources together and maintained a teacher, and in those cases a small grant would be useful

33584 If you allowed the District Board and the taluka Board a free hand in fixing the hours of attendance, the holidays during the year and other matters would village schools be more popular than they are at present?—Yes, I think so

33585 On the whole would you be in favour of giving a freer hand to the District Boards and taluka Boards in regard to primary education?—Yes, and to the village panchayats too, except in regard to curriculum and staff

33586 Would you leave that with the Education Department?—Yes, within certain limits, there should be a certain amount of latitude left even to these local bodies, the larger limits should be fixed by the department

33587 Are you in favour of the Collector remaining President of the District Board?—Yes

33588 Do you think a Collector really knows more about a district than any other man in it?—Yes, he tours constantly and that advantage might be utilized especially as I propose to finance these Boards with Government money.

33589 Are you in favour of the creation of District Councils?—Yes

33590 Is it your idea that each district shall have a small Council of non-officials, two thirds to be elected by the non official members of the Board and one third to be nominated by the Collector?—Yes

33591 What do you propose as the total number of members of such Councils?—I propose for Poona 9 members

33592 In the present state of the administration, are such District Councils likely to work satisfactorily and advantageously in most districts?—Yes.

33593 Would there be no difficulty in finding suitable men in every district?—Some men might not be quite so satisfactory as others, but in the course of time you will get the right type of men and even now you certainly would get some good men

33594 Men not only qualified but who would be willing to give their time to the work?—They will give their time and advice if the work is there and if their advice is found to produce an effect, I am certain of it

33595 In that way would the district administration be brought more in touch with the people and made more popular?—Certainly

33596 (*Mr Hichens*) What exact advantage do you expect will be derived from giving to provincial Governments separate revenues?—One would be that the growth under those revenues would naturally belong to the provincial Governments, and since all internal administration is made over to provincial Governments, we, who are naturally more interested in the internal adminis-

tration of the country, will have a larger portion of revenue devoted to our own needs.

33597. Is it better to have all the growth of two sources of revenue, or half the growth of the increase on four sources?— Under my scheme the division will be more favourable to the Local Governments.

33598. Are you assuming that all the sources are likely to increase?— Yes.

33599. Customs is a source of revenue which might expand?— Customs are amenable to the influence of England and might come down; opium is going, and salt, again, may disappear, so that really under my scheme the Local Governments will be steadily getting better and better off.

33600. Would they take an interest in screwing the revenue up?— I should object to that. But my position is this: if the revenue under a provincial head does rise, let the internal administration of the country get the full benefit of it. For instance, excise revenue is rising in spite of the protestations of the Excise Department, and if it must rise, let the internal administration at any rate get the benefit.

33601. From the point of view of control, would you advocate that the provincial Governments should have more control than they have today over these revenues which you would give them?— Yes, I would let them spend them as they thought best.

33602. I mean in the matter of collection or remission or increase?— All taxation I would leave in the hands of the Government of India.

33603. So that practically speaking, you would not give them any more control than they have today?— No, none, so far as raising the level of taxation is concerned.

33604. The only thing you hope to gain then is that they may get a larger increase?— They may get a larger increase, and there is an element of permanence about the arrangement which will have an effect all round.

33605. It is conceivable that owing to change of circumstances the revenues which you have handed over to the Government of India might expand by leaps and bounds, and that your revenue might not expand quite so fast as that of the Government of India?— This is possible; I had that in view when I left the remission of taxation in the hands of the Government of India.

33606. But do you lay stress on as great elasticity as possible in financial arrangements?— Yes.

33607. You not merely for the sake of uniformity or consistency allow the Government of India to retain revenues largely in excess of what it required, and the provincial Government to have revenues largely below what it required?— No.

33608. Would you say if an adjustment was necessary it might be made at any time?— Yes.

33609. Therefore it is not desirable to aim at too great permanence?— No, except that there should be a reasonable permanence.

33610. But you can have a reasonable permanence under divided heads?

— But if you divide heads of income you probably divide heads of expenditure, and then it gives an opportunity for the Government of India to say, " You shall not spend money in this way but in this, that, or the other way " I would make the entire expenditure and the entire revenue under certain heads imperial, so that they may be controlled by the Government of India and not by the provincial Governments

33611 With regard to expenditure, the Government of India is still to have certain control over matters of general policy ? — Yes

33612 For example, taking the case of education, would the Government of India be there to lay down general principles ? — Certainly.

33613 And it would be then the business of the Local Government to carry them out ? — Yes

33614 Taking forests as they are today, could the same principle broadly be applied ? — Yes

33615 Is it not quite conceivable that that principle should be applied without making the expenditure wholly provincial ? — Yes, there it would be a question of policy So far as expenditure is concerned, in regard to provincial heads of expenditure, the provincial Governments should have entire control except in regard to policy With regard to imperial heads of expenditure, the Government of India should be able to say, " This will reduce our expenditure even if there is no question of policy concerned, and therefore you must carry out these arrangements, " or, " It will increase our expenditure and you must not do it "

33616 Assuming the heads are still divided, is there anything unreasonable in the Government of India saying they will not interfere in matters of detail, but only in matters of general policy ? — No, if you have divided heads of expenditure and the Government of India do not interfere in matters of detail, it comes to the same thing as my system

33617 When you said the work the District Boards did today was work properly belonging to the Provincial Governments — what work did you mean ? — I meant the larger communications Considering the resources available for local expenditure I would throw the burden of those larger communications on provincial revenues

33618 Is there anything else, education for example, on the same footing ? — The cost of education comes out of the rates, and the Government makes a grant

33619 That is not one of the functions which is more properly provincial ? — A substantial grant should come out of provincial revenues, but the rest must come out of the local rates

33620 The point is, under an ideal system of district local government, what functions would you assign to the local body — would you give them the care of roads ? — Yes

33621 Would you give them the care of primary education and sanitation ? — Yes

33622. In other words, would you give them these functions which you have said would be more properly provincial? — Yes, under an ideal system.

33623. But I understood you to mean that the funds of the District Boards were inadequate to carry out these works? — My idea is this. Local self-government, strictly so-called, must be over a limited area, and when you go beyond the taluka in India you get an area which is much too large for local self-government strictly so-called, and I would therefore concentrate the local resources on taluka Boards; the District Board may take over some of these functions where necessary, but it does not mean that all the functions of local self-government in regard to these areas can, or should, be taken over by the District Board.

33624. Are not these functions, properly speaking, local functions and not provincial functions? — That depends. They are partly provincial; where the local resources are small, the district communications should certainly be maintained out of provincial revenues.

33625. There are certain roads which might be given over to the provincial Government, but apart from that is it desirable from the point of view of good government that the local authority should manage and manage in the fullest sense, all the matters which can be considered of local importance? — Yes, if there was revenue enough.

33626. The point is to find enough revenue, and you would say that it is the business of the Government to find resources adequate for the purpose? — Generally it would be the business of the Government, because whatever local revenue can be raised is already being raised, and if any more revenue is wanted, Government must provide it.

33627. Are you familiar with the system which obtains in certain other parts of the world by which the Central Government helps those who are prepared to help themselves, and makes certain pro rata contributions in proportion to the money raised locally; would that system work here? — I do not think it would; the money available here is not enough to go beyond taluka Boards, and I do not think we can raise any more locally unless the Government surrender a portion of the revenue which it at present takes. If the provincial Government would surrender a little more of its revenue to the local bodies, I would not mind taking up these functions for the districts, but today it is not possible to do so.

33628. Would you apply the principle of proportionate contribution to taluka Boards? — Yes, and I would not go beyond them.

33629. With regard to the District Councils you suggest, are they to be purely advisory? — They should be advisory in the sense that a resolution passed by them could not take effect unless the Collector accepted it; but in certain matters if the Collector could not accept a resolution he should have to go to the Government to set it aside.

33630. Is their whole object to consider matters which are not of local

budget?—I think that will not suffice. More detailed estimates would be necessary.

33645. It is also suggested by several Local Governments that it is very aggravating to them for the Government of India to alter their estimates; is it desirable that the Government of India should continue to check the provincial estimates in the interest of accuracy?—I have no direct knowledge of that. I have only heard things, but I really think, even if alteration is necessary, that it might be made in a manner which would try the patience of Local Governments less.

33646. Still I think I have heard you in the Imperial Legislative Council criticise the Government of India on the ground that their estimates have been falsified by events, and that there was a much larger surplus than was anticipated?—That is so.

33647. Therefore, might it not be legitimate, in order to avoid such criticism, that the Finance Department should take every means in their power to make their estimates as accurate as they can be?—Yes, but I do not know how far your alterations are due to this or to something else.

33648. Your scheme of division between the provincial and Imperial Government makes certain items wholly imperial, such as stamps, income-tax and registration; would the provincial Governments, which will necessarily have to manage these sources of revenue, take the same vivid interest in their development if they had no interest at all in the proceeds?—I think they will; assuming that every man does his duty fairly well, I should expect a reasonable amount of interest to be taken.

33649. Still, if there is a competition as between a source of revenue that yields you profit and a source of revenue which yields none; would it not be human nature to take care first of the source of revenue that benefits you?—In the abstract, I would say yes.

33650. Then you say it will be necessary under your scheme, besides giving certain expanding heads to the Government of India, to give them a fixed assignment, and that that assignment is to be revised every few years at conferences; will not that lead to just the same bickering that the old system of quinquennial provincial settlements gave rise to?—Yes, with this difference—the Government of India usually have a much larger surplus than the Local Government have; and even if the Government of India revenues under a certain head fell short of what was expected there would be enough to cover it from other sources.

33651. But would there not be a great deal of squabbling and bickering?—Yes, but I would rather have one Government of India discontented, than seven provincial Governments discontented.

33652. You would be prepared to face the result that you would have less remission of taxation probably under your system?—I do not expect that; I have made over to the Government of India heads under which alone there has been, or will be, remission of taxation, and if more revenues are available

to Local Governments, that means improved internal administration

33653 The Government of India, for instance, has been able to afford to reduce the salt tax because it was compensated by increased revenues under other heads, but you are diminishing their increasing revenues?—Yes, but on the other hand, look at the increased expenditure on the army and other things

33654 When you say that the Local Governments are to have a share in the loans which the Government of India raise, do you still contemplate that the Government of India should borrow for productive works?—Yes, they have been going rather fast, and I do not like the rate at which they have been borrowing but it will still be necessary to borrow for productive works

33655 Would not borrowing by Local Governments be largely non productive?—Yes, unless they borrow for feeder railways and things of that kind or small irrigation works

33656 To that extent your system would increase the net burden of the debt of India?—It need not The Government of India would float a certain loan in the market and I would share that between the provincial Governments and the Government of India

33657 But the provincial Governments might use the money for non productive purposes and in so far you would increase the burden of the debt?—Yes, but the Government of India would accept that

33658 But would you accept it?—For the present, yes

33659 Although you would give Local Governments enhanced powers in other directions you say that you would not give them any extra powers in regard to the creation of appointments Are you aware that the Secretary of State has recently relaxed his control over the Government of India in that direction?—I have read it in the papers

33660 Would you be prepared to give the Local Governments that same power?—No, I would not, while public opinion remains as weak as it is today

33661 You think it is safer in those matters to have some outside check?—I think so

33662 Would that apply also to the existing financial codes, the Civil Service Regulations as regards travelling allowances, and so forth?—Travelling allowances perhaps would stand on a different footing but as to pay and pension, certainly

33663 Is the present system of minute check by the Secretary of State on the Central Government desirable?—As far as I am aware of it, I would keep that

33664 Your District Board is really to be a Council to assist Collectors in running certain matters which the provincial Government may entrust them with?—Quite so

33665 It is practically therefore an Advisory Council But at the same time you propose certain formal Advisory Councils—are two bodies of that kind necessary?—Are you speaking of the District Council?



33666. You would have a District Board and a District Council? — Yes; the functions of the District Board are determined by statute, and the other is a more elastic body.

33667. Your local self-government stops at the taluka Board? — Yes.

33668. The District Board becomes a body for the administration of certain expenditure? — Except that it is three-fourths elected.

33669. Apart from those details, is it necessary to have two Advisory Councils in a district, one dealing with roads and education and the other with revenue and other matters? — I should not mind abolishing the District Board if its functions were made over to the District Council, but I do not want to disturb the existing machinery too much.

33670. What would happen to the present village Sanitary Boards under your scheme — would they merge in the panchayats? — I would merge them in the panchayats.

33671. Although you would think it desirable that the Collector should remain President of the District Board, you desire to keep the Sub-Divisional Officer out of the taluka Board? — Yes, except that he might attend the meetings in order to know what was going on.

33672. Are you not rather divorcing him from the economic interests of his sub-divisional charge? — Yes, but I do not much believe in his interest in the work of these local bodies; there is a desire to assert his authority in small matters, and I do not much believe in that.

33673. When he goes on tour and the people ask him for a new school or a new road, or to repair a drinking-well or a water-tank, has he to say, "I am sorry I cannot help you, you must go to Mr. X," the President of the Sub-Divisional Board"? — There is nothing wrong in that.

33674. You would make the Sub-Divisional Officer then, simply a collector of revenue; he would represent the Government in its restraining and taxing capacity but in its benevolent capacity he is no longer to have any say? — The Government itself makes over these functions to a local body.

33675. You speak of making over to the taluka Board the whole of the cess now levied; what is to become of the quarter-anna extra which has been contributed by the Government of India? — That will go to the taluka Board; if the District Board is maintained separately, I should not mind if it was retained by the District Board, otherwise I would transfer it to the taluka Board.

33676. Some of your talukas are poor, thinly peopled, and backward generally. Would they be able to stand by themselves? — If they are not able to; Government might make them a grant occasionally out of the quarter-anna contribution.

33677. You propose that one-tenth of the excise revenue should be made over to District Boards; apart from considerations as to the legitimacy of such a course, would that not lead to considerable practical injustice? — In what way?

33678. The greater part of the excise revenue in most provinces is levied in

the shape of duties at a few distilleries?—Yes but the Government might distribute it among the different Boards, it need not go according to locality

33679 Generally, the hardest drinkers are in the municipalities, would they get any share of the excise revenue?—So far as municipalities are concerned, if the Government will help them in regard to large projects and education, I would not give them any of the excise

33680 I think I remember your saying a year or two ago in the Legislative Council that you thought Government should make regular contributions to municipalities?—I am quite of that opinion in regard to these two objects

33681 You do not want a regular grant-in aid such as the District Boards get but simply specific contributions for specific schemes?—Specific contributions for sanitary projects, and a regular grant for educational purposes

33682 Which pays most towards primary education, Government or the local bodies?—I think the local bodies bear the larger proportion

33683 But the Government makes grants?—Yes

33684 Taking the Poona municipality, did you deal with primary schools only?—Yes, we have primary schools and a technical school

33685 But did you receive grants in aid?—We get grants in aid, the schools are all our own and the Government make a grant in aid We get about Rs 9 000 from Government, and about Rs 16,000 or Rs 17,000 is our own money

33686 Have you your own staff?—Yes

33687 Do you find that works satisfactorily?—Yes, fairly satisfactorily but of course there are arrangements with the Department under which it takes back men we do not want

33688 You stand on a much more independent footing than the District Board does?—Yes

33689 Quite apart from what might be done under your scheme, it has been suggested that in this province local self government consists largely in the Local Board paying for various branches of administration which the Government manage for it such as the larger roads, education, vaccination dispensaries, and so on, would you agree with that?—Substantially that is correct so far as the work of the District Boards is concerned, the taluka Boards receive very little and the District Boards retain the greater part of the revenue

33690 Would you say then there is not much real self government?—Yes, so far as District Boards are concerned that is so, and as far as taluka Boards are concerned, they have no resources

33691 (*Sir Steynning Ederly*) Do you represent any views except your own?—I represent my own views and also those of the Presidency Association of Bombay<sup>1</sup>, who have nominated me as their representative to give evidence here

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 27

33692. Have you discussed these matters with other local leaders?—Yes, and I have their authority for saying that my statement represents their views.

33693. Can you give me any names?—Yes; Sir Pherozeshah Mehta<sup>1</sup>, who is the President of the Association, has gone through my statement, and several of the other leading members have gone through it also and they have authorized me to say that it represents their views.

33694. The impression which it produces upon me is that if you can get certain reforms you are prepared for some great measure of devolution, but if not the ship of State may go on more or less to destruction in its own way?—I do not know that it will go to destruction; it might go on as it has been going.

33695. Is the suggestion quite accurate that any Local Government in India under the Secretary of State could ever be accused of possessing "absolute power"?—I think it is fairly accurate; it must not be taken literally, but it expresses a general meaning.

33696. There is always, for instance, the power of memorial and representation?—That is true.

33697. It has been suggested by other witnesses that that would be much more effective if the Government of India were not, so to speak responsible for the action which the Local Government takes; do you share that view at all?—I do not believe in that.

33698. You, I think, are organizing a society which is called the Servants of India Society, and you are collecting the most able men you can get to become members of it?—Yes.

33699. Is the object of that Society to study political problems?—Yes, that is one object.

33700. Supposing nothing were now done, can you quote any instance where an area or a population of the size of India is absolutely controlled from one centre?—No, it is very difficult, I admit. I do not think you can absolutely control an area like that from one centre.

33701. Would there not be some benefit, even supposing you could not get all you want, in decentralization?—Yes, but there would be some serious risks, and taking all the circumstances into consideration, I think the risks would be greater.

33702. Is not the Local Government rather more open to the influence of local public opinion than the Central Government?—Yes, but there is a balancing consideration, that they are subject to local prejudice far more than the Government of India. I might mention a recent instance in my own knowledge. The first Poona drainage scheme was a big scheme estimated to cost 42 lakhs, and the Government of Bombay were keen about it. The municipality did not want to go in for such a big scheme, but the Sanitary Engineer and the Bombay Government brought a lot of pressure to bear upon us, and we were made to feel that unless we accepted the scheme we should

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 115.

be set down as obstructionists. We said we did not believe in the scheme, but we said we were prepared to find some money and let the Bombay Government run the whole thing on their responsibility, but the Government of India vetoed that.

33703 Has there not been another scheme recently which is more acceptable? — Yes

33704 And that is at present blocked by whom? — By the Government of India, as far as I know

33705 Do you not think with these shared responsibilities you very often get the position that the power (meaning the Local Government) which virtually exercises the control does not bear the responsibility? — Yes, in theory I admit that

33706 Is it not one of the first principles of public administration that the person who has the power should face the music, so to speak? — Yes, but you face the music right enough so far as public opinion is concerned, which is directed against you

33707 I understand that unless you can get reform exactly in the way you want, though you admit the existing system is hopelessly ill adapted to the present needs of the country, you would prefer it to go on? — Yes, it is hopelessly ill adapted to these needs, but if the needs are not likely to be satisfied I would let the present arrangements go on

33708 I suppose your scheme for a return practically to Lord Mayo's<sup>1</sup> system of separate revenues, would be the subject of some negotiation and would have to be worked out? — Yes, *my suggestion is an illustration only*

33709 For instance, if the Government had the surpluses you suggest, and also the share of the loans annually raised, would you consider that the provision of major irrigation works for a province would be a fair provincial duty? — It is very difficult to say, because major works may be common to two or more provinces, and where there are loans against them, I do not know how you could provincialize them

33710 Can you mention any case where irrigation works are common to two provinces? — Yes, *in regard to the canals from the Indus, for instance* I cannot say that the irrigation works themselves are common, but the water from the Indus is taken both for the Punjab and Sind

33711 Would you see any great objection, when time proves that your arrangements will work, to Local Governments having power to vary taxes? — The taxes would have to be the same all over the country, otherwise there would be dissatisfaction, if the Bombay Government had a higher income tax than the Madras Government, there naturally would be dissatisfaction here

33712 Would that not depend on whether the people understood why it had been raised? — I do not expect the bulk of the people to understand why taxes are raised

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 151

33713. I understand you object to provincial Governments borrowing and think that the Government of India can borrow better, in fact that they should have charge of all banking arrangements and ways and means, but would you give Local Governments power to borrow up to a small maximum independently for particular works?—Do you mean to go into the open market?

33714. Yes, for very small sums, say up to five lakhs?—I do not think there would be any harm in that if the money was raised locally, but it is difficult to distinguish, and limits would have to be laid down not only with regard to sums, but also with regard to areas.

33715. In administrative matters, you say the first line of division that suggests itself is that the control of military and naval defence and so on should always be directly in the hands of the Government of India; what is the principle underlying that?—The internal administration of the country should be, roughly, in the hands of the Local Governments, and concerns which are common to different provinces, or which deal with the external affairs of India or matters of defence and so forth, should be in the hands of the Government of India.

33716. The principle practically is, that power should be as low down as possible, and that only things that cannot be done by Local Governments should be done by the Central Government?—I would not subscribe entirely to that. Power should be as low down as possible, subject to this, that there should be arrangements for reasonably controlling that power.

33717. Under your system would there not be sufficient power of suggestion left in the Presidency itself to secure initiation?—I do not see why there should not be.

33718. Would your panchayats necessarily be for single villages or for unions of villages?—They might be for unions where the villages are small, or I would tack on small villages to big villages.

33719. Can you suggest any principle of union?—The villages should be within a certain area.

33720. One principle which was suggested in the Central Provinces was that a market town, with the surrounding villages which habitually resort to it, would form a possible union; what do you say as to that?—It is difficult to express an opinion off-hand upon that, it is a detail which will have to be worked out by a special committee.

33721. You say in your statement that the only remedy lies in carrying a substantial measure of decentralization down to the villages, and in building up local self-government from that; that in your opinion is the very first thing that claims attention?—Yes.

33722. Then you say, "Last but not least, District Councils must be framed"—is the "last" in order of time?—In the series.

33723. Would you make panchayats before beginning that, or would you begin both simultaneously?—I would begin simultaneously; I mention this in the series as being last.

33724 Would you begin that at once too?—Yes The functions are different

33725 Your suggestion as to the decision of cases by panchayats, and the finality you would give such decisions is practically a reference to arbitration?—Yes

33726 As to roads, the Government are moving in the direction you suggest in this Presidency, of taking back a certain number of local roads for maintenance from provincial funds?—I have heard that, but I have not personal knowledge of it

33727 When you discuss the question of these much larger contributions you presuppose a very much increased provincial revenue?—Yes

33728 For instance, the present rise in the rate of living all over the country would justify an increase in the rate of pay of our lower paid servants who are under paid?—Yes

33729 And schoolmasters police, village officers, and subordinates in the Forest and Public Works Departments require more pay, which would all run into a great many lakhs of recurring expenditure?—Yes, I think it would require that

33730 And such reforms ought to come from large subsidies to Local Boards?—It ought to come along with other expenditure out of the other large surpluses which the Government of India at present retain for themselves

33731 Are the surpluses large enough to meet this increased expenditure?—Yes, there have been four or five crores every year, and if they gave about 50 lakhs a year to each province it would do

33732 You think the system by which the Education Department has the control of the curriculum and staff in essentials, is not bad, but that the Local Boards should have a great deal more authority in the general management of the schools?—Yes, roughly that would be so

33733 And without any great change of system, could an arrangement be arrived at of which you could approve?—Yes, I would give the villagers or the local people more interest in the schools

33734 As regards sanitation grants, there were orders published in the Presidency about last May, giving assistance to local bodies in the preparation of schemes of a substantial amount?—Yes, the theory has been admitted

33735 And there is a promise of assistance when schemes are ready—theoretically does that not more or less meet your views?—Yes, it is a much better state of things than before

33736 So that the Government is moving to some extent on the lines you suggest?—Yes, but after a great deal of agitation

33737 So that public opinion has occasionally had some effect with a Local Government?—In this instance, yes

33738 As regards taluka and District Boards would it be very much better for the Local Government to frankly take back all roads as provincial and change the outlook of your proposed District Council? Do you want your

District Board in addition at all?—Then I would do away with the District Board.

33739. You say that the Collector would correspond direct with Government, and Mr. Jackson suggested yesterday practically very much the same thing, but he thought that Commissioners should devote themselves to the inspection of the work which is done by the Collector; would your Inspectors-General be Commissioners in that guise?—They would be men of the same status, but I would make over the whole Presidency to one Inspector-General for certain purposes.

33740. In your experience is the great danger of the present provincial contract system and divided heads of revenue the inevitable tendency of a Secretariat to absorb authority?—Yes, I think it must be so.

33741. (*Chairman.*) You propose that the municipalities should get a grant for any extraordinary projects such as sanitation, drainage, and so forth; is that a usual system of financing a municipality?—In this Presidency it was only last year that a resolution was issued by the Government practically promising such assistance, but in Bengal, Madras and the United Provinces the system has been in work for a long time, and towards large projects the Government makes a grant.

33742. But keeps some control over the expenditure by an examination of the budget?—That is due to the backward character of the Local Self-Government Acts in those provinces.

33743. And not in your judgment because they finance the municipality?—I have discussed it with officials of the Government of India, and they have never said so.

33744. Would you be prepared on the one hand to continue the system of financing the municipality, withdrawing any examination of the budget on the other?—Yes, practically that is so on our side now.

(The witness withdrew.)

## THE MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS

*The following note<sup>1</sup> was drawn up by Gokhale at the suggestion of the then Secretary of State Lord Morley, in September 1908. In order to counteract the campaign of misrepresentation sedulously fostered against him in England he decided to make it public. And the Government of India agreed to include it in any fresh papers on reforms that they might issue.*

### *The Government of India*

Two Indians should be appointed to the Executive Council of the Viceroy.

### *Provincial Governments<sup>2</sup>*

Every Province in India (except Central Provinces and Berar) should now have at its head a Governor appointed from England assisted by an Executive Council of three or four Members. Where there are three Members, one of them should be an Indian and where there are four, two should be Indians.

The Central Provinces and Berar should have a Lieutenant Governor with a Legislative Council instead of a Chief Commissioner.

### *Composition of Legislative Councils*

In the Viceroy's Legislative Council, there should be a small majority of official and nominated Members over the elected Members. In the Provincial Legislative Councils, the elected Members should be in a majority.

The Viceroy's Council may consist, as proposed by the Government of India last year, of 55 Members. If so, it should be composed as follows.

25 Official Members :

1 Viceroy

1 Governor of the Province in which the Council assembles.

1 Commander-in-Chief

6 Ordinary Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council (Law, Finance, Home, Revenue and Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, and Military Supply)

7 Official representatives of the seven Provinces (Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Punjab, Burma and Central Provinces)

9 Other Officials, such as Director General of Education, Chairman of the Railway Board, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The circumstances in which the note was submitted are explained by Gokhale himself in his letter to the *Times*, London, included elsewhere in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Attention is invited to para 3 under 'Provincial Decentralization' in Gokhale's Note on Decentralization, included elsewhere in this volume.



5 Non-Official Members nominated by the Viceroy.

25 Elected Members :

- 13 Representatives of the seven Provinces elected by Provincial Councils : (Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Punjab and Burma, 2 each; Central Provinces 1).
- 3 Representatives of The landed gentry (Bengal 1, Central Provinces 1; and Madras and United Provinces alternately 1); Bombay, Punjab and Burma do not need special representation for the landed gentry.
- 5 Representatives of Industry and Commerce ( Calcutta Chamber of Commerce 1; Bombay Chamber of Commerce 1; Madras and Cawnpore (U.P.) Chambers of Commerce alternately 1; Planters of Assam, Behar and Southern India 1 by turns; and Bombay Millowners' Association, representing the Indian Mercantile Community 1).
- 4 Representatives of the Mahomedan community elected by special Constituencies to be created (Bengal 1, United Provinces 1, Punjab 1, Madras and Bombay 1 alternately).

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A Provincial Legislative Council should consist of not less than 50 and not more than 100 Members.

Not less than half of the Members of a Provincial Council should be elected by areas, as far as possible one Member for each District — or by constituencies representing the general community without distinction of class or creed; not more than one-quarter should be elected by constituencies representing special interests; and the remainder should be nominated by the head of the Provincial Government.

Taking the Presidency of Bombay as an illustration, I would have there a Legislative Council consisting of 60 Members composed as follows :

30 Elected Representatives :

23 Elected by 23 Districts.

2 Bombay Corporation.

3 Karachi, Poona and Ahmedabad Municipalities, 1 each.

1 Bombay University.

1 Bombay Justices of the Peace.

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10 Representatives of special interests:

- 4 Elected by special Mahomedan Constituencies (Bombay City 1, Northern, Central and Southern Divisions, 1 each. Sind may be expected to return at least 3 Mahomedan Members and so no special Mahomedan constituency is needed for Sind.)
- 2 Chambers of Commerce, Bombay & Karachi.
- 1 Millowners' Association.
- 1 Sardars in the Deccan.

11 Taluqdars of Gujerat.

1 Zemindars of Sind.

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20 Members of the Executive Council and official and Non official Members nominated by the Governor.

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### *Functions of Legislative Councils*

Subject to the veto of the President, a Legislative Council should have complete control over its own legislation. To meet extraordinary emergencies, the Viceroy's Legislative Council should have the reserve power to legislate in Provincial matters, after a Provincial Legislature has refused to pass such legislation.

A Provincial Government should be free to frame its own Budget of expenditure within the limits of the revenue assigned to it. Imperial and Provincial Budgets should be settled by Budget Committees of seven Members, of whom three should be nominated by the Non official Members of the Legislative Council. When a Budget is laid before the Legislative Council, a general discussion should first be permitted and then Members should be allowed to bring forward proposals in the form of Resolutions on which the Council should, if required by the movers, divide. The whole discussion should be subject to a time limit (not less than three days and not more than a week).

Members of a Legislative Council should have the power to raise administrative questions at Meetings of the Council in three ways: (a) By interpellations as at present, supplementary questions being permitted; (b) By a motion for papers, which the Government may accept or refuse; (c) By a Resolution, if not less than one fourth of the non official Members submit a requisition to the President to have the Resolution considered.

No Resolutions of a Legislative Council on the Budget or on questions of administration should take effect unless they are accepted by the President.

A Provincial Legislative Council should meet at least once a month.

### *District Administration<sup>1</sup>*

District Administration should be decentralized by freeing the heads of Districts largely from the present excessive Secretariat control of Provincial Governments, and substituting in place of the control so removed the control of public opinion on the spot. For this purpose, small District Councils, partly elected and partly nominated, should be created, whom the Collectors should be bound to consult in all important matters. The powers that should be con-

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the para headed 'District Administration' in Gokhale's "Note on Decentralization", which is printed elsewhere in this volume, is invited.

ferred on these Councils and the functions that should be assigned to them have been indicated in my Note on Decentralization.

### *Local Self-Government*

*Municipalities* : These should be divided into three classes. In all towns which are the headquarters of the Imperial and Provincial Governments or in which there are other special interests, the system which at present prevails in the City of Bombay should be introduced. In all other towns, with a population above 15,000 inhabitants, the Municipal Boards should consist wholly of elected Members. In towns with a population below 15,000, they should consist of three-fourths elected and one-fourth nominated Non-official Members. Provision should be made for the Government exercising stringent control in cases of gross inefficiency or corruption.

*District and Taluk Boards* : District Boards should be three-fourths elected and one-fourth nominated (non-officials). Taluk Boards should be wholly elected. The resources at the disposal of these bodies should be materially increased.

*Village Panchayats* : In all villages with a population of 500 and above, a Village Panchayat should be created of five or seven Members, partly elected and partly nominated. Smaller villages may be grouped into unions or joined to larger adjoining villages. The powers and functions which may be entrusted to these Panchayats have been set forth in my Note on Decentralization, where I have dealt with the whole question of extension of Local Self-Government in some detail.

## THE REFORM PROPOSALS

*At the twenty third session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras Gokhale moved, on December 30, 1908, the resolution relating to the reforms announced by Morley<sup>1</sup> On rising to speak he received an enthusiastic ovation He spoke as follows*

I beg to submit for your acceptance the following Resolution :  
That the following message be addressed by the Congress to Mr. A. O Hume<sup>2</sup>

(a) This Congress sends you its cordial greetings and congratulations. The reforms announced by Lord Morley are a partial fruition of the efforts made by the Congress during the last twenty three years, and we are gratified to think that to you as its father and founder they must be the source of great and sincere satisfaction

(b) This Congress offers its sincere congratulations to Sir William Wedderburn, Bart<sup>3</sup> on his recent recovery from his serious illness and takes this opportunity to give expression to its deep gratitude for the unflagging zeal, devotion, love, patience and singleness of purpose with which he has laboured for the Indian cause during the last 20 years and which has been largely instrumental in securing for Congress views and representations the favourable consideration which they have received in England

(c) This Congress desires to convey to the members of the British committee its grateful thanks for their disinterested and strenuous services in the cause of Indian political advancement.

It has been the usual practice of this Congress year after year to record before the close of its proceedings its appreciation of the work which the British Committee has been doing for us in England This year, however, in addition to that usual vote of thanks to the British Committee we propose to have two other Resolutions, one addressed to Mr Hume and other addressed to Sir William Wedderburn As regards the Committee I do not think I need say very much The Committee has done during this year the same useful work that it has been doing in the past It is true that during this year it has had to work under certain disadvantages In the first place it was deprived of the assistance and the watchful care which it received in the past from Dadabhai Naoroji,<sup>4</sup> the foremost Indian of our time, the man without self and without stain, our aged chief who bears on his head the snow of years but carries in his heart the fire of youth Then, Gentlemen, Sir William Wedderburn who has been the heart and soul of the British Committee since its formation, was prevented from giving that close and personal

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 23

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p 214.

<sup>3</sup> See foot note on p 143

<sup>4</sup> See foot note on p 82

attention to the affairs of the Committee which he gave in the past owing to serious illness, and his place as Chairman was temporarily occupied by Sir Henry Cotton<sup>1</sup>, and the work of the Committee was carried on by Sir Henry and the other members as usual. Our first duty, therefore, in this Congress is to tender our thanks to the Committee for the vigour and the vigilance with which they have pushed on the Indian cause in England.

*Mr. Hume and Sir W. Wedderburn Thanked*

Having done that, we turn to those two Englishmen, our foremost friends in England. The first clause is about Mr. Hume. Now we all know that Mr. Hume founded this Congress. We all know with what loving care he watched over it in the early years of its growth, and when he was later prevented by declining health from taking the same active interest in its development in this country, we know how he worked for this movement in England. Mr. Hume's interest in this movement has continued unflagging to this day. Mr. Hume has placed his wise guidance, his sage counsel, at our disposal whenever the need for such guidance and for such counsel has arisen. During the long reactionary period through which we have recently passed no man was more keenly disappointed over the apparent failure of the work of the Congress than Mr. Hume. No one was filled with more bitter grief and concern than Mr. Hume when last year the disaster which we all know so well overtook the Congress at Surat. I know again from personal knowledge and experience that when during the last few months anxious deliberations were going on in London in connection with the reforms just now announced, when our prospects now appeared darker and now appeared brighter no man was following these developments with more anxious interest than Mr. Hume, and now when the gloom seems to be dissipating and the first streaks of a new dawn are visible no one has a greater right to be gladdened than the founder and the father of the Congress. In sending this message to Mr. Hume, therefore, we are only performing what I call a filial duty. Mr. Hume is past 80, and we are happy to think that this comfort has been vouchsafed to him in the evening of his life, and we all fervently hope he will long be spared to observe and watch the progress which we hope to make in the new path.

Then the third clause is about Sir William. Sir William, as you all know, has just passed through a very serious illness and a serious illness at 75 is a very serious matter indeed. But a merciful Providence has spared Sir William to us, and it is but fitting and proper that we should express our joy at his recovery on this occasion. Gentlemen, only those who have seen Sir William's work for us in England, can adequately realize how much, how very much, we owe to this high-souled Englishman. During the last three years I have had to pay three visits to England in connection with this work and during all that time I was working in most intimate association with him and under his affectionate

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 193.

guidance, and I can lay claim to speak with some authority on this point. And I say this, that there has never been another Englishman who has laboured for us as Sir William has done. There have been great Englishmen—men occupying distinguished positions in the public life of England, who have befriended the cause of India in the past. The honoured names of Bright, Fawcett<sup>1</sup> and Bradlaugh<sup>2</sup> will always be cherished with love and reverence. But for them India was not the only subject occupying their time. They had other interests, they had other work, there were other claims upon their attention. With Sir William the whole thing has been different. India has been since his return twenty years ago his single interest, it has been his sole absorption, his one passion. During these twenty years, Sir William has placed at our disposal all his time, all his energies and a large part of his own personal resources ungrudgingly. For us he has borne much, through good report and through evil report, through sunshine and through storm this high-souled Englishman has stood by us. He sought entrance into the House of Commons for our sake, he gave up a Parliamentary career when he found the demands made by his constituents inconsistent with the performance of his self-imposed task. For us he was prepared to lose caste with his countrymen in this land. He has joyed with us in our joys, he has sorrowed with us in our sorrows, he was filled with anxiety when we were anxious, but he never gave way to despair when we were all filled with despair. Now that a new morn is greeting us, I am sure new friends will come to cheer us, but Sir William has kept vigil by our side during the night. I therefore propose that the best thanks of this Congress should be tendered to Sir William on this occasion because I firmly believe, and I am sure those who know how much Sir William has done will also believe, that he has been largely instrumental in pushing the Indian question to the front in England and securing for it that favourable consideration which it is receiving there today.

### *Reforms • a Partial Fruition of Congress Efforts*

Having said so much about the personal portion of this Resolution, I will, if you will permit me, make a few observations on one sentence in the first part of this Resolution. That sentence is this. In our message to Hume we say "the reforms announced by Lord Morley are a partial fruition of the efforts made by the Congress during the last twenty-three years." I think it would not be irrelevant and it would not be inappropriate if I examine briefly how the new reforms that have been announced constitute what has been described here as a partial fruition of the efforts made by the Congress during the last twenty-three years. For this purpose you must briefly glance in the first instance at

<sup>1</sup> Henry Fawcett (1833–1884), lost his eyesight by a shooting accident (1858), published *Manual of Political Economy* (1863), Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge (1863–84). Liberal M.P. (1865, 68, & 74), member, Committee on Indian Finance (1871–74), popularly known as 'member for India', Post Master General (1880).

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 140.

the efforts made by the Congress during the last twenty-three years, and secondly, you must glance at the reforms that have been announced, taking with them the other measures which have gone before the present announcement and other measures which are likely to come in the near future.

So far as the Congress is concerned, briefly you may say that it has sought three objects during the last twenty-three years. The first may be called a social object; the Congress has sought to promote greater unity among the different elements in this country, and the Congress has sought to promote a greater feeling of nationality throughout the land. Speaking of uniting even here on this platform after the unhappy separation which we all deplore, speaking here I may say that today the feeling of unity in the country, taking the divergent elements of the country into consideration, is stronger, deeper and more real than it was twenty-three years ago. The same is true of the feeling of nationality. From one end of the country to the other there is a new impulse, a new feeling, a new vibration; and everybody who is interested in the progress of India must rejoice that that feeling of nationality is a true, a deep and a real one in the land today. That part however of the work of the Congress we must put aside for the present. But there were two others and those were objects we had in view, special references to the influence we ought to exercise on the Government. One was pressing on the attention of the Government specific measures either of improvement or for the redress of grievances, numerous measures to which I am not going to make any reference just now. But the second object underlying all those measures we advocated, and urged by us side by side with them, was to modify as largely as possible the bureaucratic character of the present administration. Now in some respects the most important part of the work of the Congress during these twenty-three years has been the energy expended by it on modifying the bureaucratic administration. And so far as that is concerned, I think we may fairly say that the new measures that have been announced go a long way to effect the modification. What are those measures?

I would like to glance at these measures comprehensively and then see how far this claim is justified. For that I want you to take the appointment of two Indians to the Secretary of State's Council with the reforms, also again the measures that will come next year as a result of the Decentralization Commission's Report<sup>1</sup>—all these three hang together, they are part of one whole and what do they amount to? For that you must compare the position that we shall occupy after these reforms have come with what it was last year. You may compare the whole administration to an edifice. At the base you have rural and urban self-government; in the centre the general everyday Administration, Legislation and Finance, and at the summit you have the bodies exercising supreme power, the Executive and the Secretary of State's Council, the seat of final authority where policies are determined and

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 90.

important questions really settled. That being the summit and the other being the centre and local self government being the base, I want you to consider where we were till last year and where we shall be after these reforms are fully carried out.

### *Assessment of Reforms*

So far as local self government is concerned, we have a little local self government just now. Of course, the name is local self-government. I was for four years at the head of a Municipal Administration, we know what we possess and how much it is — I know it is not much. That is the present position so far as local self government is concerned. Then about the centre, we have opportunities of expressing our views about Finance once a year in discussing the Budget and on Legislation whenever a new measure is in contemplation. About the general everyday administration from top to bottom there is absolutely no opportunity of placing our views in a responsible manner before those who are in authority over us. And as regards the summit, viz. those bodies where policies are determined, well, we have no access to these bodies whatever today. Now, what will be the position under the new arrangement? At the base we shall have full control over and management of our local affairs, the fabric of local self-government started by Lord Ripon<sup>1</sup> is to be carried to a proper and fitting completion — that itself is a most important thing. Local self-government has been described by many and very properly described, as a training ground, a school of political education for our people. We shall have as much scope there for political education as we choose to have.

Then as regards the centre the position will be so largely modified as to amount to almost a revolution. At the present moment in regard to administration it is all confidential reports from subordinate officers to the highest till at last the top is reached, and we know nothing till the final decision is arrived at and announced, and even if the decision is unfavourable to us or we do not like it, we can only express our regret in our own way and keep still. Under the new arrangement all questions affecting everyday administration which involve matters of public importance can be brought in a responsible manner before those in authority in the Legislative Councils of the Provinces. In these Councils again a non official majority has been provided for. This non official majority with the power of raising administrative questions is really an exceedingly important step, and I am quite sure it will very largely modify the bureaucratic character of the existing administration. Then, in regard to Finance our control will be greater. The full extent of the control over Finance will not be realized until the larger scheme of Provincial Decentralization is carried out, but that will be known only when orders are passed on the Decentralization Commission's Report. But it is expected, and

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 32



this is a matter of public knowledge, that as a result of that Commission's labour the Provincial Governments will be largely freed from the control which the Government of India exercise over them at present and in place of the control so removed the control of the Legislative Councils will be substituted — the control of discussion and criticism.

Lastly, as regards the seats of the highest power and authority, the Executive Councils, Indians are to be admitted to these Councils. They are already on the Secretary of State's Council, and we know what good work is being done by them there. They are to be admitted to the Indian Executive Councils, which means in formulating policies and determining large questions, racial considerations will recede in the background. The mere presence of Indians will prevent that. Again the Indian view of questions will be available there, and I expect nothing but good from the appointment of Indians to these Councils. Thus we shall have reasonable access to the highest seats of authority, we shall have fair opportunities of exercising influence in matters of Finance and Administration by means of debate, and we shall have got full management of the local affairs. More than this, a non-official majority in the Provincial Councils really means preventive control over Provincial Legislation. We cannot of course pass any law we please because there is the veto of the Government, but the Government cannot pass any law it pleases without our consent because we have secured preventive control over Provincial legislation.

In regard to the Supreme Legislature the position is somewhat different. But under this new scheme the Government of India will recede more and more in the background and the Provincial Government will come more to the front and loom larger in our eyes, and we shall have all the opportunities we require for influencing the course of Provincial administration. There was a disposition yesterday to complain that for the Supreme Council the Secretary of State's scheme is really less favourable to us than that proposed by the Government of India, and there was also a disposition to complain that the scheme of electoral Colleges and the scheme of proportional representation would emphasize the importance of class representation too much. I think, gentlemen, in regard to both these points it would be well if you went away from the Congress with clear and definite ideas. So far as the Supreme Council is concerned, the constitution proposed is part of a whole scheme. What the Government of India proposed was that in the eight Councils, one Imperial and seven Provincial, there was to be a standing official majority. In regard to the Imperial Council, owing to the long distance of Calcutta from the Provinces from which official members had to come, it was provided by the Government of India that the majority should not always be present there, but that it should be called into existence whenever it was required. For all practical purposes the majority was there, whereas in regard to Provincial Councils also there was to be an official majority. The Secretary of State has taken a momentous step in advance of these proposals; instead of having an official majority in all these Councils he has freed seven Councils out of eight from

this official majority. Of course, there must be a reserve of power kept somewhere, because, at the present stage of our progress, it is not reasonable to expect that the British Government will give control over Legislation and Administration to us. But by concentrating an official majority in the Supreme Council, Provincial Legislatures have all been freed from the shackles of official majority. And in so far as the Government of India will recede into the background and as this official majority there is mainly a reserve power, as practical men we should be satisfied with the scheme. We must gratefully accept this scheme as it stands, because it must be accepted or rejected as a whole.

### *Electoral Colleges and Class Representation*

Then about the Electoral Colleges and the representation of class interests, it is all very well to say that the end we have in view is absolute unity in the country, union among all different elements. We have many other ends in view in life, and the followers of a certain religion expect the millennium one day, but we have to deal with the existing facts as they are. There are acute class differences in the country today, and any scheme of representation which secures to important classes proper representation by means of election, representation by men in whom they have confidence, any scheme of this description which secures this really, in my opinion, promotes the true interest of unity in the country, it removes the causes of bickering, the sourness of feeling, that otherwise would exist there. Speaking of the Mahomedan community among whom I have most valued friends, I may say this that when this scheme is found to be working in practice — the scheme of proportional representation, and when they find themselves adequately represented by men elected by themselves and having their confidence, they will be disabused of a certain fear which they have unjustly entertained, namely, that they would be swamped by Hindus and they would be encouraged to throw in their lot with us in this great National work. Gentlemen, I have explained in the few observations I have made how things are today and what our position will be when the whole of this scheme is carried into effect. I now come to a few concluding remarks.

### *From Agitation to Responsible Association*

Stated in one sentence I may describe the change thus. Hitherto, we have been engaged in agitation from outside, from now we shall be engaged in what might be called responsible association with the administration. It is still not control over administration, it is still not any large share of administration but it is association and responsible association in administration. There is plenty of scope for growth here, and as we grow and discharge the responsibilities that devolve on us properly, I am sure there will be progress further and further towards our having what may be called responsible administration. From agitation to responsible association and from responsible

association — a long and weary step but the step will have to come — to responsible administration. Now these large and generous concessions which have been made by the Government and the Secretary of State must receive at our hands that response which they require. They impose upon us two responsibilities in particular; the first is that a spirit of co-operation with the Government must now be evoked amongst us instead of mere criticism of Government. The scheme will fail of its purpose and will prove absolutely useless in practice if our attitude is one of constant antagonism. Therefore the first responsibility that rests upon us is that the scheme should evoke in us a spirit of cooperation with Government.

The second is that the new powers should be exercised with moderation and with restraint and they should be solely used for the promotion of the interests of the masses of the people. There are so many questions awaiting solution, but under the existing system somehow the officials do not find sufficient time for their proper consideration. There is the question of mass education, there is the question of sanitation, there is the question of the indebtedness of the peasantry, there is the question of technical education and so forth. I do not deny a good deal is being done, but I say much more can be done when the Government has the co-operation of the Councils. I am sure much more will be done in the future in these directions than the past. Therefore these new powers must be exercised with moderation and restraint, and they must be exercised in the interest of the masses of the people. If this is done I really have no fear about the future. Gentlemen, let us not talk so much of that veto which Government have reserved to themselves as some of my friends have been doing. To attack the veto or to expect or hope that the veto would be done away with in the near future is not to understand constitutional Government anywhere in the world. Even at present the House of Commons works under what may be called a double veto, namely, the practical veto of the House of Lords and the theoretical veto of the Sovereign. They are a self-governing people, and yet they bear all the inconveniences of this double veto. Let us grow to the full bounds of the new opportunities and it will be time enough to talk of circumscribing the veto which is vested in the Government.

### *New Opportunities*

One word more and I have done. We are most of us in India, Hindus, Mahomedans and Parsees, a somewhat dreamy race. Of course, the Hindus are most so. I do not deny that dreams occasionally are a source of pleasure, even if they effect nothing else. Moreover I admit the importance of dreams in shaping our aspirations for the future, but in practical matters we have to be practical men and have to remember two things. Life is not like writing on a clean slate. We have to take the words existing on the slate and add other words so as to make complete sentences and produce a harmonious meaning. Secondly, whatever you may ask for, that is not the same thing as what you will get or will be qualified to get or in practice maintain if you get. Let us therefore not

go in pursuit of mere idle dreams and neglect the opportunities which the present offers to us. On the manner in which we, especially the younger section of our countrymen, grow to the height of the new opportunities will depend the future of the country. None of us wants to be satisfied with the things as they are. But first we must prove that we can bear these responsibilities before we can ask for any more. I have often said, and I repeat here again that I do not want any limits, any restrictions on the growth which should be open to our people. I want the people of our country, men and women, to be able to rise to the full height of their stature as men and women of other countries do. But our growth can only be through the discharge of responsibilities, they must first be well discharged before we can think of further responsibilities. Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you heartily for the manner in which you have listened to me and for the way in which you have received me.

## MEMORANDUM ON REFORMS

*Three foolscap-sized volumes containing official and un-official documents connected with the Government of India's proposals for constitutional reforms in India were published by the Government in 1908. The papers relate to the Government of India's reform scheme of August 1907. These include, on pp. 1481-1482, the following memorandum submitted by Gokhale. It runs as follows :*

### *Step Forward Urged*

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 has been amply justified by the high average level of work done by elected Additional Members in the Supreme and Provincial Councils during the last twelve years, and I think the time has come when another step forward should be taken in reforming these Councils, so as to increase their usefulness. The instalment of reform, which has now clearly become due, is (1) a further expansion of these Councils, with a larger proportion of elected members, and (2) empowering the members to divide the Councils on the Budget proposals of the Government which should be carried out only after they have been passed by the Councils.

### *Expansion of Legislative Councils*

2. As regards expansion. Taking first the Supreme Legislative Council, I would, in the first place, propose that the number of Additional Members should be a fixed one, and not fluctuating, as at present. And I would fix the number of members of this Council for the present at, say, 30, including the Viceroy, the Lieutenant-Governor, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Ordinary Members of the Government. This would mean that the number of Additional Members should be 21, and of this, I would throw 14 seats open to election as follows: 2 to Madras, Bombay, Bengal, and United Provinces each; 1 to Punjab, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Central Provinces, and Burma each; 1 to the different Chambers of Commerce; and one to the different Industries. The remaining 7 seats should be at the free disposal of the Government. The representative of the Chambers of Commerce will always be a European, and the representative of Industries will generally be so: And these men will, as a rule, vote with the Government. On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that the elected member for Burma will not always vote with other elected provincial members. Assuming, however, that all the elected provincial members vote together on any question, they will be 12 or at the most 13 in a Council of 30. The Government is thus assured of a standing majority behind it, and, in addition to this, the power of vetoing any proposal passed by the Council should be vested in the Viceroy. This should make the proposed reform quite safe, even from the official standpoint; the great advantage will be that it will make the minority a respectable one, instead of the

negligible quantity that it at present is and the moral result of such an improvement in the position of elected members will be considerable. This is as regards the Viceregal Legislative Council.

As regards the Provincial Councils, a larger measure of expansion is necessary. I think every district in a province should now be empowered to send a member to the Legislative Council of that province. Thus, taking Bombay which has 22 districts, I would have 22 elected members of the 22 districts and 3 men for the Bombay City, 1 elected by the Corporation, 1 by the Chamber of Commerce, and 1 by the University. This will raise the number of elected members to 25. If the total strength of the Council is raised to 55, including the Governor and the two Ordinary Members, it will mean 27 seats at the disposal of Government, and as the representative of the Chamber of Commerce will always be a European, ordinarily even when the elected members vote together, they will be 24 in a body of 55 — a minority, but a respectable minority. Here, too, the power of veto may be vested in the Governor, so that the expansion may be safe even from the official standpoint for all practical purposes. The proposal, if accepted, will raise the level of public life throughout the Presidency by making it better informed and more responsible. It will bring at least one prominent man from each district into direct contact with the highest officers of the Government, and this will enable the Government far more effectively than at present to understand the trend of thought and feeling in the different districts.

#### *Councils must Vote on Budgets*

3 These expanded Councils must further be empowered to record their votes on the Budget proposals of the Government, the members being permitted to move amendments within such limits as may be thought desirable at present to impose. I think the best plan will be to submit the whole Budget to the judgment of a Council, the number of amendments which a member may move being determined by the necessity of bringing the discussion to a close within certain specified time limits. Thus, the Budget Debate in the Viceregal Legislative Council may, for the present, be limited to seven days, and that, in the Provincial Councils, to a fortnight. To begin with, a large measure of discretion may be left to the Presidents in regard to the number of amendments which different members may move, and the order in which they may be moved. In a short time, it will be possible to lay down definite rules on the subject, so as to reduce the area of such discretion. Thus in the Viceroy's Council, a member may be allowed to make one general speech on the whole Budget, and then move at least one amendment. If he wants to move more amendments than one, he should do so, if only the President grants permission. At the close of a week in the Viceroy's Council and of a fortnight in the Provincial Councils, the discussion should be automatically brought to a close, and the Budgets, with whatever amendments may have been accepted, should be put to the vote and passed.

4. I think it is of the utmost importance that these two reforms should be effected simultaneously. A mere increase in numbers and even in the proportion of elected members will be of but little use, unless it is accompanied by a larger voice to the representatives of the people in financial administration. On the other hand, if such voice is given to elected members, when their number, especially in the Supreme Legislative Council, is so insignificant, the advance, though no doubt important, will fail to meet the requirements of the situation.

5. I now come to the proposals briefly outlined to me by Mr. Baker<sup>1</sup> last month. They are: (1) Dividing the Budget into two parts, one of which is not to be open to discussion in the Council, and the second of which is to be discussed and voted upon, members being free to move what amendments they pleased in regard to it. (2) And the formation of a Budget Committee, composed, in the case of the Supreme Legislative Council, of seven members (the 4 civilian Ordinary Members of the Government, the representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Bengal, and 2 other members of the Council elected by the Additional Members from among themselves). Of these 2, as regards the first proposal, I will at once admit that there is much to be said in its favour; and though the inclusion of military expenditure in the first or consolidated part of the Budget will remove it from the sphere of legitimate and necessary criticism, still, if members will be allowed to make general observations on the Budget before they come to their amendments, and if the expenditure on the Army will not be excluded from the scope of such general observations, I am prepared to welcome the Finance Member's proposal in a cordial spirit.

### *Budget Committee*

As regards the Budget Committee, that is a more difficult matter in certain respects. There is no doubt, however, that if adequate representation is secured to the elected members of the Council on it, it will be a most valuable and important step forward. Mr. Baker proposes that the Additional Members of the Council should select two out of themselves to work on the Committee. I may state at once that, as the Council is constituted at present this will mean no real representation to elected members, who are only 4 out of 15 Additional Members (the Chamber of Commerce member being excluded, as he is always to have a seat on the Committee). Unless, therefore, the Council is expanded and the proportion of elected members increased, as I have suggested above, there is every probability of the more prominent representatives of the people in the Council being kept out of the Budget committee, and in that

<sup>1</sup> Mr. (later Sir) EDWARD NORMAN BAKER, I.C.S., started service in Bengal (1878); Under Secretary, Finance Department, Government of India (1885); Financial Secretary to Bengal Government (1898-1902); Finance Member, Government of India (1905-09); Lt.-Governor of Bengal (1908-11).

case, I would prefer that no members were elected by the Additional Members, and the Government itself accepted the responsibility for inviting to sit on the Committee such members as it deemed best qualified for the purpose. *The formation of this Budget Committee and the framing by it of the second part of the Budget will, of course, be a great improvement on existing arrangements, but the full object, which Mr. Baker no doubt has in view, will not be attained, unless the Council is expanded as I have suggested above, and the elected element placed in a position to return its 2 representatives to the Budget Committee.*



## "THE TIMES" AND THE REFORMS

*The following letter from Gokhale, written in Bombay on April 3, was published in the London "Times" of Monday, April 19, 1909 :*

With reference to the comments which have appeared in your columns on my note on constitutional reforms, submitted to the Secretary of State for India, towards the end of September last, and the attacks made on the Indian Councils Bill for its supposed connection with that note, will you kindly permit me to say a few words ?

Last April I was deputed by the Presidency Association<sup>1</sup> of Bombay to proceed to England and lay before the authorities there their views on the proposed constitutional reforms. Before this deputation the Association had submitted an exhaustive memorial to the Government of India on the subject, and they had also laid their views before the Decentralization Commission,<sup>2</sup> before whom I gave evidence on their behalf. In view of the extreme gravity of the situation in India, however, it was thought necessary to supplement the representations made in this country by similar representations in England. The Secretary of State gave me a most kind, ready and patient hearing, and at his suggestion I drew up my note, embodying briefly the changes that we advocated. The note was only a summary of the views laid before the Government of India and the Decentralization Commission, with very slight modifications, suggested by my discussions with a number of public men in England. There was nothing private or personal about that note.

The publication of the despatches between the Government of India and the Secretary of State, and the statement by Lord Morley<sup>3</sup> in the House of Lords, had an almost magical effect on the situation in India. And the unique deputation<sup>4</sup> that waited upon the Viceroy immediately afterwards, consisting of leading men from all classes of the community, showed with what relief, gratitude and enthusiasm the announcement was received throughout the country. In a few days, however, a feeling sprang up among the Mahomedans that their special interests were not sufficiently safeguarded by the scheme of representation outlined in Lord Morley's despatch, and advantage was at once taken of this feeling to add to it an element of great bitterness by representing the scheme as the result of Hindu intrigue in London. Soon afterwards my name was openly mentioned in this connection and the mischief threatened to grow quite serious. I felt that one way of counteracting these unscrupulous attempts was to publish the views which I had laid before Lord Morley, and in which I had taken the same line as the Government of India on the Mahomedan question, and I decided to publish my note. Before doing so, however, I thought it was due to the Government of India that I should formally lay a copy before them, and they readily and most courteously granted my request to include it among any fresh papers on reforms that they might issue. There was no "demand" made by me for publication, and, of course, nothing was further from my mind than to make any complaint. On the publication of the note several Mahomedan friends wrote to me to express their satisfaction at what I had done. It is now two and a half months since the note appeared in almost all the leading papers in India — Indian and Anglo-Indian. Not one word similar to the comments that have been made by your correspondent has yet

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 27.      <sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> This was a deputation composed of 100 leading men from both the Bengals representing different political parties and different sections of society. It waited upon the Viceroy Lord Minto on December 24, 1908 "to express our gratitude to the Government for the great step it has taken in associating us with the administration of the country."

appeared in any of the papers. The note caused no surprise in this country, because the changes advocated therein have been urged publicly again and again, and are familiar to all. Your special correspondent was in this country when the note appeared. He did not fail to report to you the significance of half a dozen schoolboys, out of a crowd of several hundreds, hooting me at the Sholapur station on my way to Madras, and he certainly would have deemed it his duty to draw your attention to my note if he had thought that there was anything remarkable about it.

As regards the attacks which have been made on the Indian Councils Bill for its supposed connection with my note — attacks which have caused great astonishment in this country — can anybody really and honestly imagine that Lord Morley would have undertaken to make important constitutional changes merely because such changes were urged in my note, if he had not had behind him most weighty official support? Let us take the several points in the note one by one. The first is the admission of Indians to the Viceroy's executive Council. "Thirty years in India" (I suppose he meant to write "Thirty years out of India") and other Rip Van Winkles may imagine that I was the first and sole person to urge this great step of advance. Did they read Lord Morley's speech in the House of Lords of December 17 last, and if so, have they any excuse for ignoring the fact that the Secretary of State has acted in this matter on the strong and repeated recommendation of no less a person than the Viceroy? It is significant that Sir A. Arundel,<sup>1</sup> and Sir A. Fraser,<sup>2</sup> who retired from service after the new currents of thought and feeling had set in motion in India, have both admitted the necessity and usefulness of this great vindication of the late Queen's gracious Proclamation. The second point is about provincial executive councils. Here, the Decentralization Commission have made precisely the same recommendation as that contained in our representation, and any one can see that Lord Morley has based his proposal on the authority of the Commission. As regards the reform of the legislative councils, which the Government of India rightly consider to be the most important and far reaching part of the whole scheme, the proposals contained in Lord Morley's despatch may be analysed under three heads — number, composition and functions. Of these, the numbers finally sanctioned are those of the Government of India. As regards the functions, too, the expansion comes for the most part from the Government of India. Only in one particular — and that a comparatively small one, — namely about supplementary questions — has Lord Morley gone beyond the Government of India. Lastly, as regards composition, it is a mistake to suppose that Lord Morley has conceded what was asked for in my note. I speak on this point with considerable reluctance, because since the reforms were announced I have been most anxious not to say one word which could suggest that we were not satisfied with the large and generous scheme that had been offered. But the two main ideas in my note as regards the composition of provincial councils were an elected majority and district representation, neither of which has been conceded by the Secretary of State. He has, no doubt, decided to have a non-official majority in provincial councils, but any one who knows anything about these councils will at once see that that is a widely different thing from an elected majority. Thus in a council of 50, if we have 20 elected members, 24 officials and six nominated non-officials, we have a non-official majority. But it is not an elected majority, and the council will consist of 20 men elected by the people, and 30 men dependent upon the Government for their membership. Lastly, as regards local self government, there is only one general paragraph in the Secretary of State's despatch, and it follows mainly the line of advance indicated by all high official authorities including the Decentralization Commission. Two years ago Lord Minto in his reply to the Mahomedan deputation, had foreshadowed such advance. It is necessary to remember that in regard to legislative councils and local self government, Lord Morley, as he himself has told us, has acted on the recommendations of Lord MacDonnell's committee.

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 8

<sup>2</sup> Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces (1898-1903) Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (1903-08)

The whole point of the criticism directed against the Bill, with which I am dealing in the letter, comes to this : Several of the changes urged in my note have happened to coincide with the recommendations made by important official authorities. I suppose the critics would have been better pleased if we had asked for something wild and unreasonable which the Government could not grant. In that case they would not have attacked the Bill on the present grounds, but they would have had an opportunity to attack " agitators " for making wild and unreasonable proposals. They must attack somebody.

communities and the contributions made by them to the progress of the world, Gokhale proceeded to consider their respective positions at the present day in India.

The Mahomedan minority, who were a little over one-fifth of the whole population, was very unequally divided among the different Provinces. In the Punjab and East Bengal they actually formed a majority of the population, being a little over one-half in the Punjab and about three-fifths in East Bengal. In Bombay, on the other hand, they were only one-fifth; in West Bengal between one-fifth and one-sixth, in the United Provinces one-seventh, in Madras about one sixteenth, and in the Central Provinces less than one-twentieth. The bulk of the Mahomedans did not differ from the Hindus in race, but they had to remember that religion was a most powerful factor in life and it modified and sometimes profoundly modified race characteristics. In numbers, in wealth, in education and public spirit, the advantage at present lay with the Hindus. They had also so far contributed far more than the other community to the present national awakening in India. But they were greatly hampered by castes, and by temperament they were mild and passive. On the other hand, the Mahomedans were burdened with fewer divisions, their social structure rested on a more democratic basis, they had more cohesion among them, and they were more easily roused to action. The worst of the situation was that over the greater part of India the two communities had inherited a tradition of antagonism, which, though it might ordinarily lie dormant, broke forth into activity at the smallest provocation. It was that tradition that had to be overcome. And though there were certain special difficulties in their way and the task at times appeared well-nigh impossible, it was no more impossible than what Europe had to face for more than two centuries in the fierce antagonism between Protestants and Catholics. Spread of education, a wide and efficient performance of civic duties, growth of national aspirations and a quickening of national self-respect in both communities were among the forces which would ultimately overcome the tradition. The progress in that direction was bound to be slow and there were sure to be repeated set-backs. But they must believe in final success with all their will and persevere ceaselessly against all odds. It was a commonplace of Indian politics that there could be no future for India as a nation, unless a spirit of co-operation of a sufficiently durable character was developed and established between the two great communities in all public matters. They could not get over that, no matter how angry they might be at times with one another. And those among them who wished to devote themselves to the promotion of such co-operation had no choice but to refrain as far as possible from joining in controversies likely to embitter the relations between the two sides, and exercising forbearance and self-restraint themselves, to counsel it in others. The speaker was of opinion that a special responsibility lay in the matter with the Hindus, who had an advantage over the other community in regard to the spread of education and who were therefore in a better position to appreciate

the needs of a growing nationality. They could also do a great deal towards the establishment of better relations if some of them devoted themselves to education and other useful work among Mahomedans for the special benefit of that community. Such work could not in course of time fail to be appreciated, and it would powerfully help in gradually substituting confidence and goodwill and co-operation in place of the present distrust and suspicion and aloofness.

### *Separate Electorates*

Having thus dealt with the general position, Gokhale proceeded to express his view of the controversy that had agitated the country during the last six months. Much of the excitement, he said, had been due to a misapprehension of the character and scope of the new reforms. Gokhale stated his own position in the matter quite frankly. He had all along been in favour of special separate electorates for important minorities but he wanted such electorates to provide not the whole of the representation to which the communities were entitled but only so much of it as was necessary to redress the deficiencies and inequalities of general elections, and he wanted the same treatment to be extended to other important minorities than Mahomedans, where necessary. Gokhale held strongly that in the best interests of their public life and for the future of their land they must first have elections on a territorial basis in which all communities without distinction of race or creed should participate and then special separate supplementary elections should be held to secure the fair and adequate representation of such important minorities as had received less than their full share in the general elections. He had urged that view publicly from his place in the Viceroy's Legislative Council last March<sup>1</sup> and he had been called hard names by both sides for it. He however adhered to his view that in the present circumstances of the country, that was the only course which reasonably safeguarded the interests of all communities and prevented injustice to any one of them in practice. As far as they could see, the Government of India's original proposals had been very much on those lines. And if the Secretary of State had not unfortunately disturbed them in the first instance, very probably they would not have heard much of the demands that had since been made. No doubt, under those proposals special treatment was proposed to be accorded only to Mahomedans, but there was nothing to prevent the same treatment being extended to others later on if necessary. The Secretary of State, however, having proposed, from the highest motives as they could all see, a scheme of his own and having afterwards found it necessary to

<sup>1</sup> What Gokhale said on this point in his 1909 Budget speech on 29th March was "I think the most reasonable plan is to throw open a substantial minimum of seats to election on a territorial basis, in which all qualified to vote should take part without distinction of race or creed. And then supplementary elections should be held for minorities which numerically or otherwise are important enough to need special representation, and these should be confined to members of the minorities only."

abandon it and fall back again on the Government of India's proposals, did so in language which opened the door to large demands by the Moslem League. Straightway the League threw the Government of India's proposals overboard and began to urge the grant of larger concessions. Gokhale made no complaint of this. Indeed so far as the League urged this substitution of election in place of nomination for all special seats, his sympathies were with the League. But when some of the leading spokesmen of the Moslem community demanded a larger representation than they were justly entitled to on ground such as special importance and higher loyalty, traditional or otherwise, an occasion undoubtedly arose when it became the duty of the other communities in the country to protest strongly against such claims. His own feeling in the matter was the same as that of their great leader Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, than whom the country had no wiser or more patriotic guide.

### *Excessive Representation Depreciated*

Gokhale associated himself fully with the telegram recently despatched, and as he knew, most reluctantly despatched by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta to the Government of India. He had assented to that telegram personally, having specially attended the meeting of the Presidency Association<sup>2</sup> for the purpose. When any one said that his community was important and should receive fair and adequate representation, the claim was entitled to the sympathetic consideration of all. But when any one urged that his community was specially important and should therefore receive representation in excess of its fair share, the undoubted and irresistible implication was that the other communities were comparatively inferior and should receive less than their fair share. That was a position to which naturally the other communities could not assent. British rule was based on equal treatment for all communities, and the speaker trusted that the Government would never be so weak as to lean for support on any one community in particular.

It was urged that the Mahomedans had ruled in India for five centuries. It must not however be forgotten that the Hindus had ruled for countless centuries before them and even afterwards, before the British came on the scene, the Mahomedan power had been broken and displaced over nearly the whole country by a revival of Hindu rule. Then it was said that there were large Mahomedan populations in other countries — some of them self-governing countries — and that invested the Mahomedans of India with special importance. Gokhale could not see how that mattered in determining the extent of the representation which the Government of India should grant to its own subjects, unless it was on the assumption that in the administration of this country, those whose whole heart was not with India were to have preference over those whose was. Moreover the same ground could with

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 27.

equal reason be urged by Indian Christians and by Budhists. Lastly, as regards the higher traditional loyalty of Mahomedans to British rule, the claim was not historically tenable. And even during the last two or three years Mahomedan names had not been altogether absent from the lists of those speakers and writers against whom the Government had thought it necessary to proceed, though it must be admitted that the number of such names had been extremely small.

Before concluding Gokhale referred to the speech recently made by His Highness the Aga Khan<sup>1</sup>. He said that he read portions of that speech with considerable astonishment and he could not help regretting that so well-informed and broadminded a gentleman as His Highness should have been labouring under so much misapprehension. His Highness had said that unless larger concessions were made to the Mahomedans the Hindus would be exultant and triumphant. All that Gokhale could say about this was that His Highness was evidently not in touch with Hindu feeling in the matter. Not only was there no disposition among the Hindus to exult or to feel triumphant but there was actually a sullen feeling of resentment throughout the country, a feeling daily growing deeper and stronger, that the Government had not held the balance even and that it had already leaned too much on the Mahomedan side.

His Highness had further said that unless additional concessions were made to Mahomedans, it would mean a monopoly of political power to the Hindus. Gokhale said that he rubbed his eyes as he read that statement. Surely the Aga Khan could not be under the impression that what the Government proposed to do was to hand over the administration of the country to elected Councils with Hindu majority in them. Even with the Councils reconstituted as proposed the last word would still be with the officials. The enlargement of the Councils and the increase in the proportion of elected members were no doubt important matters but they were not so important as to afford to any community the shadow of an opportunity to obtain a monopoly of political power in the country. As the speaker had often pointed out the most important and valuable part of the reform of Legislative Councils was the power proposed to be conferred on members to raise discussion on administrative matters. This power, if wisely exercised would gradually give the country an administration conducted in the light of day and under the scrutiny of public discussion in place of the present administration carried on in the dark and behind the backs of the people. For this purpose what really mattered was the capacity, the public spirit and the sense of responsibility of the members. How many members were returned by any particular community was not of

<sup>1</sup> HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN, P. C. head of the Ismaili sect among Muslims which numbers more than a million in India, took a leading part in founding the Aligarh Muslim University member, Imperial Legislative Council, president League of Nations Council author of *India in Transition*

much consequence, and a member or two more or less on this side or that would not make the smallest difference in practice. Gokhale earnestly trusted that Government would soon close the question in a definite manner and he was confident that before long the present sourness of feeling would disappear and normal relations again return between the two communities. When once the new Councils commenced to work it would be realized that there was no demand or scope there for work on sectarian lines and the man who worked for all would find his service appreciated by all communities. Controversies like the present were occasionally inevitable, but if they took care not to employ words or express sentiments which would leave sourness behind, they might succeed in averting the injury which otherwise was likely to result to the best interests of their growing nationality. They were all of them trustees of those interests, and the world and their own posterity would judge them by the manner in which they discharged that trust.



## POST-WAR REFORMS FOR INDIA

### *Response to Limited Official Request*

*Mr V S Srinivasa Sastri<sup>1</sup> issued the following statement to the Press explaining the circumstances in which Gokhale prepared the memorandum published by the Aga Khan<sup>2</sup>*

I send for publication a copy of the post war reform scheme formulated by Gokhale and published by His Highness the Aga Khan in England. I do not think any one is to blame on this occasion, but it is a great pity that time after time important pronouncements regarding India should be made and important documents published first in England. I do not see why the Indian public should wait for the full text of Gokhale's scheme till the English papers containing it are received here.

I was not in Poona when Gokhale drew up the proposals, but I ascertained the facts about its genesis as soon as I went there after his death. They are briefly as follows:

A high official authority requested him to put into definite form the reforms in the Indian constitution which, in his opinion, should be granted by the Government to satisfy the new Indian aspirations before agitation for it should become strong. Gokhale, unwilling to bear undivided responsibility for advice in so delicate and important a matter, resolved to consult confidentially both His Highness the Aga Khan and the late Sir P. Mehta<sup>3</sup> on the subject. A personal consultation between three such busy and eminent persons, two of them suffering from failing health, could not be easily arranged. After some days' delay Gokhale made a pencil draft of his own ideas on the subject with the intention of modifying and revising it in the light of the suggestions and criticisms that might be made by his two friends, whom he should invite to Poona for the purpose. As a preparation for this personal consultation, he had two type-written copies of the draft scheme made by his Secretary with a strict order that they

<sup>1</sup> V S SRINIVASA SASTRI P C C H (1869-1946) joined the Servants of India Society (1907), president Servants of India Society (1915-27) member, Madras Legislative Council member, Viceroy's Legislative Council (1916-20), member Council of State (1921), represented India at the Imperial Conference League of Nations Assembly and Armaments Limitation Conference (1921) toured Australia New Zealand and Canada in Indian interests (1922), attended R T C in South Africa (1926), first Agent of the Government of India in South Africa (1927-29) member Royal Commission on Labour in India (1929) delegate to the first two Indian Round Table Conferences in London, vice-chancellor, Annamalai University (1935-40)

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p 311

<sup>3</sup> See foot note on p 115

should be kept confidential and a copy sent to each of them. As he died within two days after this, the proposed meeting did not come off.

Certain points, therefore, require to be borne in mind in reading the scheme. Firstly, it was a draft preliminary to a consultation and could not be said to represent Gokhale's final conclusions. That the draft reads so well is a proof that the subject was very familiar to Gokhale and that he habitually thought with care and precision. In the second place, the draft was intended to represent not what, in Gokhale's opinion, the people of India were fit for and entitled to, but what, if announced by the Government of their own accord and early enough, might, in Gokhale's judgment, avert an agitation during the war and ensure the fullest co-operation of the people of India. Lastly, it was prepared within six months after the beginning of the war and much before the popular movement in India had taken full shape and before the emergence of those great and momentous changes of constitution and government, the principles underlying which are finding acceptance in the Allied countries and seem to be making their way into the politics of the Central Powers. I cannot believe that Gokhale would, if he were writing on behalf of the people of India, have voiced any but the most progressive and the most enlightened phase of political thought compatible with the safety of the Empire and the ordered advance of the country. Various persons dealing with various subjects claim to know Gokhale's views best and invoke his posthumous authority for their own views. I recognize the risks of being cocksure in such a matter, and the chance of error that must attend any statement as to what a man's views would have been in circumstances that had not arisen in his lifetime. Still I have hazarded the statement once before and hazard it now, that if Gokhale were alive today he would be among the strongest exponents of the essential principles embodied in the memorandum<sup>1</sup> of the Nineteen and in the scheme adopted by the National Congress and the Moslem League.<sup>2</sup>

*Madras, 18th August, 1917.*

### *Provincial Autonomy*

The grant of Provincial Autonomy foreshadowed in the Delhi Despatch,

<sup>1</sup> Submitted by nineteen elected members of the Indian Legislative Council in October 1916. Among other things, it demanded a position of comradeship for the Indian people, and asked that half the number of members of executive councils, both provincial and central, should be Indians. It also pressed for elected majorities in all legislative councils and for the right to vote on the budget in the shape of money bills.

<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive scheme of reforms passed on December 29, 1916 at the 31st session of the Indian National Congress held at Lucknow. It was also adopted by the All-India Muslim League at its meeting also held at Lucknow two days later. It asked, among other things, for a four-fifths elected majority in the provincial councils as also in the Imperial Legislative Council.

would be a fitting concession to make to the people of India at the close of the war. This will involve the two fold operation of freeing the Provincial Governments on one side from the greater part of the control which is at present exercised over them by the Government of India and the Secretary of State in connection with the internal administration of the country, and substituting on the other, in place of the control so removed, the control of the representatives of tax payers through Provincial Legislative Councils. I indicate below in brief outline the form of administration that should be set up in different Provinces to carry out this idea

### *Provincial Executive*

Each Province should have

1. A Governor appointed from England at the head of the Administration
2. A Cabinet or Executive Council of six members three of whom should be Englishmen and three Indians with the following portfolios
  - (a) Home (including Law and Justice)
  - (b) Finance
  - (c) Agriculture, Irrigation and Public Works
  - (d) Education
  - (e) Local Self-Government (including Sanitation and Medical Relief)
  - (f) Industries and Commerce

While members of the Indian Civil Service should be eligible for appointment to the Executive Council, no place in the Council should be reserved for them, the best men available being taken, both English and Indian

### *Provincial Legislative Councils*

3. A Legislative Council of between 75 and 100 Members, of whom not less than four-fifths should be elected by different constituencies and interests. Thus in the Bombay Presidency, roughly speaking each District should return two members, one representing Municipalities and the other District and Taluka Boards. The City of Bombay should have about ten members allotted to it. Bodies in the Mofussil like the Karachi Chamber, Ahmedabad mill-owners, Deccan Sardars should have a member each. Then there would be the special representation of Mahomedans and here and there a member may have to be given to communities like the Lingayats where they are strong. There should be no nominated non official members except as experts. A few official members may be added by the Governor as experts or to assist in representing the Executive Government.

### *Relations between Executive and Legislature*

4. The relations between the Executive Government and the Legislative Council so constituted should be roughly similar to those between the Imperial Government and the Reichstag in Germany. The Council will have to pass all Provincial legislation and its assent will be necessary to additions

an honorary agency, the functions of the District Boards should be strictly limited and the Collector should continue to be its ex-officio President

### *Government of India*

1 The Provinces being thus rendered practically autonomous, the Constitution of the Executive Council or the Cabinet of the Viceroy will have to be correspondingly altered. At present there are four members in that Council with portfolios which concern the internal administration of the country, namely, Home, Agriculture, Education, and Industries and Commerce. As all internal administration will now be made over to Provincial Governments and the Government of India will only retain in its hands nominal control to be exercised on very rare occasions, one member to be called member for the Interior should suffice in place of these four. It will, however, be necessary to create certain other portfolios and I would have the Council consist of the following six members, at least two of whom shall always be Indians

(a) Interior, (b) Finance, (c) Law, (d) Defence, (e) Communications (Railways, Post and Telegraph), and (f) Foreign

### *Constitution of Central Legislature*

(a) The Legislative Council of the Viceroy should be styled the Legislative Assembly of India. Its members should be raised to about one hundred to begin with and its powers enlarged, but the principle of an official majority (for which perhaps it will suffice to substitute a nominated majority) should for the present be maintained, until sufficient experience has been gathered of the working of autonomous arrangements for Provinces. This will give the Government of India a reserve power in connection with Provincial administration to be exercised in emergencies. Thus if a Provincial Legislative Council persistently decline to pass legislation which the Government regard to be essential in the vital interest of the Province it could be passed by the Government of India in its Legislative Assembly over the head of the Province. Such occasions would be extremely rare, but the reserve power will give a sense of security to the authorities and will induce them to enter on the great experiment of Provincial Autonomy with greater readiness. Subject to this principle of an official or nominated majority being for the present maintained, the Assembly should have increased opportunities of influencing the policy of the Government by discussion, questions connected with the Army and Navy (to be now created) being placed on a level with other questions. In fiscal matters, the Government of India so constituted should be freed from the control of the Secretary of State whose control in other matters too should be largely reduced, his Council being abolished and his position steadily approximated to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Commissions in the Army and Navy must now be given to Indians, with proper facilities for Military and Naval instructions.

German East Africa, if conquered from the Germans, should be reserved for Indian colonization and should be handed over to the Government of India.

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PART III  
SPEECHES IN ENGLAND

8

## DISCONTENT IN INDIA

*On the evening of Friday, the 6th October 1905, Gokhale addressed a large meeting in Manchester of Mr Schwann's<sup>1</sup> constituents His speech was reported as follows in the Manchester Guardian*

Gokhale, on rising to address the meeting, was received with great enthusiasm He spoke first of the appreciation of the Indian people for the sympathetic interest which Mr Schwann had for so many years taken in their affairs "If the faith of my countrymen in your sense of justice and love of fair play is still alive, in spite of many disappointments and many discouragements, it is due to the fact that there are among you men like Mr Schwann, who place righteousness above everything else "

### *Present Discontent in India*

Explaining his mission in England, he said he had come on behalf of the Indian National Congress to arouse the sympathetic interest of the electors of this country in the affairs of India "Never, in my opinion," he said, "was there greater need of your paying attention to the affairs of that great dependency The country is at this moment seething with discontent from one end to the other The good work which it has taken large hearted English statesmen years and years to do has been to a great extent undone, and one of the greatest provinces of that country, Bengal, which has one fourth of the population of the whole country, is today in a state of open hostility to the administration of the land This is a very serious situation, and the electors of this country who are ultimately responsible for the good government of that land, must find out who is responsible for creating the present situation " Gokhale traced graphically the development of the situation

### *A Most Reactionary Policy*

He described the Liberal policy governing the administration of India up to the end of Lord Ripons<sup>2</sup> distinguished viceroyalty, and then proceeded to show how in the last ten years that good work had been destroyed "During the last ten years a wave of Imperialism has swept over the whole of the Empire You here have suffered from that wave, and you can imagine how much more people have suffered who in their own country are more or less at the mercy of the officials whom you send out to govern them This

<sup>1</sup> Mr (later Sir) CHARLES ERNEST SCHWANN, BART P C., Secretary, treasurer and president Manchester Liberal Association, President Reform Club, President for nine years of National Reform Union carried Bill for granting votes to Policemen in Municipal and School Board elections

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p 32

## DISCONTENT IN INDIA

*On the evening of Friday, the 6th October 1905, Gokhale addressed a large meeting in Manchester of Mr Schwann's<sup>1</sup> constituents His speech was reported as follows in the Manchester Guardian*

Gokhale, on rising to address the meeting, was received with great enthusiasm He spoke first of the appreciation of the Indian people for the sympathetic interest which Mr Schwann had for so many years taken in their affairs "If the faith of my countrymen in your sense of justice and love of fair play is still alive, in spite of many disappointments and many discouragements, it is due to the fact that there are among you men like Mr Schwann, who place righteousness above everything else "

### *Present Discontent in India*

Explaining his mission in England, he said he had come on behalf of the Indian National Congress to arouse the sympathetic interest of the electors of this country in the affairs of India "Never, in my opinion," he said, "was there greater need of your paying attention to the affairs of that great dependency The country is at this moment seething with discontent from one end to the other The good work which it has taken large hearted English statesmen years and years to do has been to a great extent undone, and one of the greatest provinces of that country, Bengal, which has one fourth of the population of the whole country, is today in a state of open hostility to the administration of the land This is a very serious situation, and the electors of this country who are ultimately responsible for the good government of that land, must find out who is responsible for creating the present situation " Gokhale traced graphically the development of the situation

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Imperialism has resulted in a most reactionary policy being adopted. Imaginary dangers are looked for in various directions. The Government has taken it into its head to think that if the people are not disloyal today they may be disloyal tomorrow, and so they are saying, 'Let us cripple them for once and all, so that they shall be incapable ever of rising against our rule.' The result has been that the clock has been put back amazingly. The local self-government which Lord Ripon gave us has been largely curtailed; the universities have been officialized; they have tried to fetter the Press by passing the Official Secrets Act; they have abolished competition for the higher offices, which means that official patronage has been enormously increased and the opportunities for Indian people to enter the services of their country have been largely reduced.

### *The Partition of Bengal*

"But more than all these things," Gokhale continued, "there has come this partition of Bengal, about which I wish to speak specially tonight because I understand that there is considerable soreness felt in Lancashire about the turn events have taken lately. I want you to realize that this partition, which is now driving the people of Bengal to a state of utter despair, does not stand by itself. It is the last of a series of reactionary and repressive measures which have shaken the people's confidence in the intentions of the Government, and which have made the people feel that unless they help themselves nobody else will help them." Gokhale explained why the partition of Bengal is so objectionable to the people. He pointed out that Bengal is the largest province in India, with a population of 70 or 80 millions. That population was composed of four different communities, who differed in language, and in some cases in race. In the centre of the province were the Bengalis, some 30 millions in number. Speaking with greater liberty as a native of Bombay himself, he described the Bengalis as the most influential community in India, and as intellectually among the finest people in the world. They had a most powerful Press, they had wealth among them, they were fired by national aspirations, and they had great political influence with their countrymen. Living in Calcutta for four months every year, he knew how many lovable qualities the Bengalis had, and he knew that one had only to deal with them in a right spirit to earn their lasting friendship. Their instinct was to be docile and law-abiding. It was these people who were now being roused against the Government, and who in their despair had declared a boycott against English goods.

### *An Alternative to Partition*

The Bengalis, more than any other community in India, were marked out for Government disapproval and displeasure, and there were officials who thought if these people could be gagged the work of administration would be easier. How to deal with the Bengalis had always been the problem with

those who wanted to turn their back upon promises given in the past in the name of the English people. What, therefore, was the plan that had been adopted? The proposal was to divide Bengal into two parts, to put half the Bengalis into one province and the other half into another province, and to reduce them to the position of a hopeless minority in both. The Bengalis naturally received the proposal with feelings of consternation and dismay. They felt that the solidarity of their race would be destroyed. The contention of the Government was that Bengal was too great an administrative charge for one man. But partition was not the only means of dealing with the difficulty that was presented by the size of Bengal. They might, for instance, have given Bengal a Governor in Council in place of a Lieutenant Governor, as at present. A Governor in Council was assisted by two colleagues, and thus there were three men to divide the work of administration whereas a Lieutenant Governor had to do all the work himself. That was the solution proposed by Sir H. Cotton.<sup>1</sup> A Governor in Council was, however, appointed from England, and Lord Curzon<sup>2</sup> would not have a man who would be partly independent of him.

### *History of the Idea*

Lord Curzon, therefore, preferred the plan of partition. He started the idea in 1903. The plan at first was to take away only a small slice of Bengal — two districts — and to add it to the Eastern Administration. The people who lived in this proposed slice protested. The Viceroy went and visited them, but though he talked in a 'firm' manner the people would not be put down — and the Viceroy seemed to have dropped the idea of partition like a hot potato. From the beginning of last year until two months ago not a word was heard about partition. The people thought that nothing further would be done and had they known the Government were going on with the scheme many of them would have come to England to call attention to the seriousness of the proposal. The Government went to work in the dark, and two months ago the new scheme of partition — a much larger one than the first, since it proposed to cut off not a twelfth but a half of the province — was sprung upon the people. The storm that was aroused was fiercer than ever. Then came the debate in the House of Commons when the question was raised on a motion for the adjournment by Mr Herbert Roberts.<sup>3</sup> On the occasion of that debate Mr Brodrick<sup>4</sup> promised to furnish Parliament with further papers in order that the House might have better material on which to form a judgment. This was taken to mean that no further steps would be taken without Parliament having a chance to express an opinion. Thus at any rate, was how Mr Brodrick's speech was understood. The agitation, therefore, became a little quieter. But a month ago Lord Curzon announced that the scheme of partition would be carried into effect on October 16.

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> See foot note on p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> See foot note on p. 194.

*Complications that Must Arise*

Gokhale detailed as complications that must inevitably arise from the partition — the withdrawal of many men of ability and influence from residence in Calcutta, the crippling of the power of the Calcutta Press, the interference with the educational work of Calcutta, and the probable reduction of the importance of the High Court of Calcutta. These were some of the things that would make this partition disadvantageous to the people of Bengal. But there was one body that would gain very largely by the partition — the body of officials. The partition would create so many new prizes for the Civil Service that there was a fine outlook indeed for these men, and it was one of the most astonishing things in connexion with the partition that the Lieutenant-Governor should have reported to the Viceroy, saying that he had consulted several members of the Civil Service, and " they were all in favour of it. " Of course they were in favour of it; whoever expected that they would be otherwise? But was it not remarkable that although these Civil Service officials were consulted not one word of opinion was ever asked from a non-official Indian? The non-official Indians had to a man ranged themselves against the partition, even those who live in mortal terror of displeasing the Government — a sure proof of their earnest conviction that a grave mistake was being made. The influential Indians had done everything possible to stop the partition, but all their efforts had proved absolutely useless. Now he wanted to ask the people of England if this was the way in which the British Government of India was to be carried on? The rich zemindar was patted on the back for his loyalty, and when money was wanted for special purposes he was tapped for tens of thousands, but a question of vital importance to the interests of this country was settled without even consulting him in any way, and this after a hundred years of progressive British rule was a disheartening state of things.

*Why the Boycott Was Begun*

Gokhale spoke not only of the legislative restrictions that had been imposed on the Indian population, but also of the disparaging remarks on the Bengalees as a race which Lord Curzon made at Calcutta, and said : " With feelings alienated and trampled on like this, with the partition scheme concocted in the dark, and persisted in spite of every effort made to persuade the Government to give it up, what were the people to do? They tried to move the Government on the spot and failed. They approached the Secretary of State and failed. They approached Parliament and failed. They knew from bitter experience how difficult it is to get you English people to take any real interest in the affairs of India. I say this not to blame anybody: The situation is difficult. There are six thousand miles between us, and you have your own problems. We know that you do not wish that India should be badly governed, and all we ask is that she shall be governed in accordance with the

English traditions of constitutional liberty and freedom Therefore I am sure that when the whole position is brought home to you you will rise as one man and put an end to these Russian methods of administration Well, what was to be done? The question was urgent, and the people in sheer despair, driven well nigh to madness, wanted to strike at the Government somehow, since the Government would not listen to them Then they said 'Manchester' people are the countrymen of this Government Lancashire pays no heed to our affairs Lancashire could exercise its power in our favour, but it does not, very well, we shall have nothing to do with Lancashire goods ' That was the real explanation of the boycott

### *Manchester School of Liberalism*

The name of Manchester is greatly honoured in India for many reasons, amongst others because you are represented in the Press by a newspaper like the *Manchester Guardian* than which there is no better friend to our people in this country, because you are represented in Parliament by Mr. Schwann, and because we honour the great names associated with what is known as the Manchester School The principles of the Manchester School are that there should be peace abroad and reform at home, and that peoples shall be permitted to rise according to their capabilities to the fullest possible self government, and therefore we respect the Manchester School Why, then, you may ask, have we taken a step against Manchester? Well, what else could the people do? The Manchester trade was the only vulnerable point at which we could strike against the Government of India, and we struck not with the object of injuring you in your pockets, because, if we must buy from outsiders, we would sooner buy from you than from America, but because you are in the position to call this reactionary Government to account I regret the necessity for resorting to this measure I understand that you are sore and angry I was even told in London that it would not be a pleasant thing to come to Manchester to address a meeting because people were embittered against the Indians for the boycott But I said I would take the risk I am not sorry that you are angry, because I want you to be angry, but I want you to turn your anger not against the helpless people, who have been driven to the last possible measure that they could take in an extremity, but against those officials of yours who are responsible for the unhappy situation that has been brought about

## INDIAN VIEW OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

*On Monday, October 9, 1905, Gokhale delivered an address to the Fabian Society, London, on "An Indian View of Indian Affairs." He then spoke as follows :*

Gokhale, after thanking the Fabian Society for allowing him that opportunity of addressing the members, said he had come from India in order to arouse the interest of the people of England in the affairs of India. They were on the eve of a General Election, and consequently their friends in India thought this a fitting opportunity to make a special appeal to the English democracy with a view to inducing them to take some kind of interest in the affairs of that dependency.

### *India and the Empire*

India was regarded as part of the British Empire, but what was the actual relationship between Great Britain and India? Much depended on the meaning attached to the word Empire. If that term meant mere inclusion under one flag, then, no doubt, India was actually a part of the British Empire; but if it were to be taken as meaning ascendancy of race, as Lord Rosebery<sup>1</sup> once put it, then India was only a possession of the British Empire, and not part and parcel of it. The position of India in the Empire was, no doubt, an exceptional one. First, they had the United Kingdom, which, as the centre of the Empire, bore the greater part of the responsibility, but at the same time enjoyed to the fullest extent the privileges of Empire. Then come the self-governing Colonies, which, while enjoying the privileges, hardly bore any share in the responsibilities of Empire. Following these came the Crown Colonies, one section of which were on the road to self-government, while the remainder were intended to be held under the despotic sway of England, as India was held today. He would say nothing about the Protectorates, which came within another category, but would come at once to the position of India, which formed the largest part of the Empire, but which was governed as a mere possession of the British people. Three features showed that it had no part or lot in the Empire. - In the first place, the people were kept disarmed; it was thought to be dangerous to allow them to carry arms. Secondly, they had absolutely no voice in the government of their own country; they were expressly disqualified from holding certain high offices, and practically excluded from others. Lastly, they were not allowed a share in the privileges of the Empire in any portion outside British India, except a limited one in the United Kingdom itself.

<sup>1</sup> EARL OF ROSEBERY (1847-1921); Lord Rector, Aberdeen University (1878); Under-secretary, Home Office (1881); Foreign Secretary (1886); visited India (1886); Prime Minister of England (1894).

*Elements of Hope*

But there were also some elements of hope for them. The Indians were a civilized race long before the ancestors of Englishmen knew what civilization was. The genius of the race, however, showed itself in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, science, and art. Their people did not develop a love of free institutions, they paid no attention to political questions and for that they were now paying the penalty. Their religious ideals had been largely responsible for their having been content to live under the rule of foreigners. Their religion taught them that their existence in this world was only a temporary sojourn to qualify them for a better state of things in the next world. Brought up under a teaching like that, it was not surprising that their people had been content to allow the task of government to be undertaken by anyone sufficiently strong to grasp it, provided they were not oppressed too much, and were allowed to have freedom in the exercise of personal and domestic duties. Their great desire, indeed, was to be free to pursue the higher purpose of existence as they understood it. But now they were coming under new influences, for a spirit of nationality had been aroused in India, and it was making steady progress. The more the people came to understand the dignity of free institutions the greater would be their progress in this new direction.

The second element of hope was that the declared policy of British rule in India — a policy not yet wholly repudiated — was one of eventual equality for the two races. From time to time British statesmen had laid down a certain policy regarding British rule in India, though how far it had been acted upon in practice was quite another story. Seventy five years ago the policy of equality for all races in India was first laid down, there was, they were then told, to be no governing caste in India. The policy thus laid down by statute remained a dead letter, and twenty five years later the Sovereign of that day again enunciated it, telling them that the Government of England was bound by the same ties towards the people of India as bound it to all other members of the British Empire. It was this declared policy which constituted another element of hope in the situation — the hope that, eventually they would be able to enjoy the full status and full privileges of British citizenship. No doubt, at the present moment the equality was a legal fiction, but even a legal fiction had its uses, it afforded them some ground for hoping that, in time, their position, unsatisfactory as it was at the present moment, would improve, so that they would eventually become an integral part of the Empire.

*Government of the Russian Model*

Were they on the high road to the attainment of that destiny? What was the nature of the government to which they were subject? The Government of India was a civil and military bureaucracy, at the head of which was an autocracy. It was in 1858 that supreme control over the affairs of India was vested in the British Parliament. The Secretary of State for India — who, as a rule, knew very little about Indian affairs — was advised by a Council

composed of ten or twelve retired Anglo-Indian officials. The responsibility, then for Indian affairs in this country rested practically with the Secretary of State and his Council, for in Parliament he had a large party majority at his back. In India itself the head of the Government was the Viceroy, who also had his Council, and, from the Viceroy downwards, the government was in the hands of British officials. In fact, the whole system of government was modelled on Russian methods; it was a system unworthy of free England — unworthy of a country which gloried itself on the possession of constitutional liberty; it was a system of government dependent largely on confidential police reports, on the surveillance of people suspected of entertaining advanced ideas, and hostility towards the educated classes. There was absolutely no popular control in the government of the country. The Collector or District Magistrate was in no way subject to popular influence, and whatever plans were devised for the better government of the people of India were devised in the dark, the people knew nothing about them until they were actually ready to be enforced, and then their protests were practically of no avail. The whole country was thus given over to officialdom; some of the officials, no doubt, were very conscientious men, but the system soon made autocrats of them, and he ventured to think that the resultant evils from such a system would not be avoided even if they could import angels from heaven to fill these offices.

### *Official Monopoly of Power*

British officials in India were, after all, average men with human faults and merits. But the unfortunate tendency of the system was to emphasize the faults, while the merits were compelled to take a back seat. One natural consequence of the system was that the first thought of the official was to protect and guard his own monopoly of power. He resented any criticism of his action, and tried to put down with an iron hand any manifestations of discontent on the part of the people, or any attempt on their part to associate themselves with the government of their own country, and although there might be an appeal to the Secretary of State in this country or to Parliament, the system was such that it was impossible to carry any vote against the Indian Minister, who had his party majority at his back and who also had the further assistance of a sort of conspiracy between the two front benches to keep India outside the range of party — in other words, to pay no attention to her at all; and though the people of England might be in a position to influence Parliament, they unfortunately knew very little about India, and cared less about it. It was only when there was a dispute between officials like Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener<sup>1</sup> that public attention was drawn to India; otherwise nothing was heard of the country, and a province might be partitioned,

<sup>1</sup> Lord KITCHENER (1850 - 1916); Field-Marshal; member of a joint English, French and German Commission to delimit the territory of the Sultan of Zanzibar (1885); Governor-General of Eastern Sudan (1886-88); Commander-in-Chief in India (1900-09); British Agent and Consul-General, Egypt (1911); Secretary for War (1914-1916).

despite the protests of hundreds of public meetings, without any notice being taken of the matter in this country.

### *No Responsibility*

Now the absence of control involved, of course, an absence of responsibility. The British officials in India often spoke of their responsibility to England, Lord Curzon, who was a very fine phrase-maker, told them he had the good name of England to guard, and that nowhere else in the world would they find a body of officials animated by such lofty sentiments as characterized the Indian Service. He spoke of them as men spending the best of their lives in voluntary exile — the question of salary was always kept well in the background — working for an ungrateful people, who were constantly denouncing them, and to whose slanders they must remain indifferent. Those who had no actual personal experience of British rule in India might easily be carried away by such language, and might be led to think that the best course for them was to leave the whole matter to the officials, so as not to hamper them in their great work. But he thought they could commit no greater mistake than that. Their responsibility was two fold — first, to prevent oppression, and secondly, to devise active measures for raising the people to a higher level of political and economic life. But for this responsibility there was no scope in the present system of administration. The heads of the Government in India were appointed for only a term of five years. It took them two or three years to understand Indian questions, and when they had accomplished that, it was time for them to begin packing their trunks. They could not, therefore, be expected to promote any large schemes of constructive policy, which would disturb existing interests, and which they could not remain on the spot to handle. There was every inducement to the officials to continue in the old groove, for they knew that if they suggested anything outside their ordinary duties, it would have cold water thrown upon it by others higher in authority. Hence the necessity for a deliberative assembly in India which could carry on its deliberations from year to year, and which could undertake responsibility which was now neglected.

### *Wave of Reaction*

He had already referred to the policy of equality which had been declared from time to time. The Marquis of Ripon<sup>1</sup> was the first statesman to endeavour to give effect to that policy, but his efforts in that direction provoked so much hostility on the part of the officials, and so much persecution on the part of his own countrymen, that no subsequent Viceroy had ventured to follow his example, and his effort to put the declaration of policy into practice had never since been repeated. On the contrary, there has been a reaction, especially within the last two or three years. Great Britain had suffered from a wave of

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.



Imperialism, that Imperialism had taken its worst form in India. He could understand an Imperialism which would give opportunities to all concerned, but in India they had to face a narrower and lower kind of Imperialism, which was represented by mere racial ascendancy and arrogance, and which looked upon the world as though it was made for the white races only, the other races being intended by Providence simply to be footstools for the white races. That was the kind of Imperialism which had been rampant in India, and surely the people of England did not approve of that. Some people were content to deal with evils as they existed; others tried to look for imaginary evils and to insure their country, so to speak, against the future. Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> belonged to the latter class. He saw no disloyalty in India at the present time, but he thought that there was nothing to prevent the people becoming disloyal one day, and therefore his plan was to cripple them once for all, and thus make them incapable of acting disloyally, if ever they inclined to do it.

### *Lord Curzon's Unpopular Acts*

His endeavour had been to tighten the grip of the English official on the land; to put more power into his hands, and to make it more and more impossible for the Indian ever to claim equality with the English in his own land. Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty had proved about the most unpopular they had ever had under British rule. What had Lord Curzon done? He had reduced the popular element in local government, which was conceded by Lord Ripon; by his Official Secrets Act he had tried to fetter the Native Press, which had been doing so much to promote and arouse the national spirit; he had circumscribed the scope of University education by dissociating in practice the independent Indian element from the government of the Universities; he had done away with competitive examinations for the higher official appointments for Indians, leaving the nominations to patronage, and thereby enormously increasing the power of the official bureaucracy, as well as tending to make the administration less efficient by depriving it of the services of men of real capacity and independence. These were the measures that had made his administration so extremely unpopular, while the manner in which they had been forced on the people had increased their anger with them. Lord Curzon did not believe in the principle of liberty; he did not believe in the aspirations of the people; had he his way, the government of this country would go back into the hands of the aristocracy, and he would reverse that policy which induced England to help the Greeks and the Italians in their struggles for liberty.

### *The Partition of Bengal*

What was the object of the partition of Bengal? It was to divide into two a homogeneous nation proud of their unity—the Bengalis, who were the most advanced intellectually of the races of India, and who were doing so much to advance the feeling of nationality throughout the country. The partition was

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.

being carried out in opposition to the wishes of a united people, and it illustrated the spirit in which India was being governed. The people were absolutely helpless in the matter, they had no remedy, and hence they appealed to the British democracy to come to their assistance. The only weapon they could use in their own defence they had decided to use, they had declared a boycott against British goods, for while they had no feeling against the English people personally, they had recognized the necessity of attacking the Government at its only vulnerable point—the pockets of its countrymen—and he could assure them that this boycott was a step of which the Government and the merchants were only now beginning to realize the seriousness.

### *The Economic Situation*

As to the economic situation, India had few industries other than the cotton industry. Her village industries had been wiped out by the competition of steam and machinery. She was mainly dependent on her agriculture. It was admitted, even by the officials, that she was extremely poor, but an attempt had been made upon most unreliable data to prove that in the last two decades the income per head of population had increased from 27 to 30 rupees per year. But was that borne out by the statistics? According to these, the population was not increasing at the rate at which it increased in other parts, and while the income-tax which was paid by the upper and middle classes remained practically stationary, the salt tax—the burden on the poorer classes—had not even shown an increase proportionate to the growth of the population. The area of land under superior crops was diminishing, and that under inferior crops was increasing, because the soil was becoming exhausted, and the people had not the capital with which to improve it. The peasantry were in debt to an extent which was experienced in no other part of the world. And why? They were the most frugal, thrifty, and industrious people that could be found anywhere, but they were perpetually in the hands of money-lenders, largely due to the system of land administration, which imposed a burden far beyond what the land could bear. No doubt Indian finance in the last few years had shown surpluses, but they had been produced by artificial means, by increasing the gold value of the rupee. There was extraordinary inconsistency in the spectacle of a thriving Treasury and a starving peasantry which surely proved that there was something rotten in the State of Denmark.

### *The Remedy Colonial Self-Government*

What was the remedy they were seeking for all these evils? The Indian National Congress asked that the people should be associated in larger measure with the government of the country, that eventually the Colonial type of self-government should be attained. Let there be no artificial interference with their growth. Japan had recently shown what could be done in that direction. But the Japanese were not intellectually superior to the people of India, and, given the same opportunities, there was no reason why equally satisfactory results

should not obtain in India. Finally, he would like to point out that British and Indian interests were identical. Under a better system of government the Indians would increase in wealth, and British trade would benefit, and he therefore most earnestly appealed to the English people to use whatever influence they had with their Government in favour of gradually liberalizing the foundations of the Government of India, and of placing the people there on a footing of equality with the inhabitants of other parts of the Empire. Let them become in reality part and parcel of the Empire, and hand in hand they could then go forward and prove a source of strength, and not of weakness, to that Empire.

### *Questions Answered*

Several members of the audience then put questions to the lecturer. Asked if the terrible poverty of India was solely attributable to the British Government, Gokhale said the responsibility for it undoubtedly rested very largely with the system of administration maintained, under which between Rupees twenty to thirty millions were annually drained from India, thereby depriving it of that capital which was so necessary for the promotion of industrial development. He did not believe that the present system of caste would militate against the people of India taking a wider view and interest in the government of their country. As a matter of fact, the feeling of nationality was modifying the caste system. They were becoming united in seeking the removal of the disabilities under which they now suffered; they wanted the Colonial type of self-government eventually; as immediate steps they would like an increase in the number of Indian members of the Viceroy's Council; they would like, too, to see the Indian element introduced into the Council of the Secretary of State for India; and, finally, they desired to see India directly represented in the British House of Commons.

## NEW REFORM CLUB BANQUET

*The New Reform Club on Tuesday, November 14 1905 entertained Gokhale to a complimentary banquet in London Sir Henry Cotton<sup>1</sup> presided*

### *Gokhale on the Indian Problem*

Gokhale was warmly applauded on rising to respond. He said it is difficult for me to find words to express in an adequate manner my sense of the great honour which the New Reform Club had done me this evening. I am sure my countrymen in India will be profoundly gratified to read the terms in which the invitation of this Club has been couched. The invitation states that this banquet is intended to be a mark of the Club's sense of the high Imperial responsibility of the people of the United Kingdom for the welfare of their Indian fellow subjects. It was precisely to rouse the British people to a sense of this responsibility that I was charged by my countrymen to undertake this mission, and I have no doubt they will feel greatly encouraged when they see an important political body like the New Reform Club expressing in so signal a manner their sympathy with our aims and our work. You, Sir, and those Englishmen who think with you, very often speak of the awakening of India. To my mind this banquet is a sign, a most gratifying and unmistakable sign, of another awakening, the awakening of England to the claims of India. I think it is time such an awakening took place.

It was in 1833 that your Parliament announced to the people of India that the Government of the country would be so conducted that there would be no governing caste in that country, and that the rule would be one of equality for the two races in that land. Three fourths of a century have since elapsed, and still you not only find a governing caste in that land, but that caste is as vigorous, as dominant, as exclusive as ever. It was, perhaps, inevitable that in the earlier years of your rule, when an administrative machinery of the Western type had to be introduced into India, that all power should be placed in the hands of English officials, who alone then understood Western standards of government. But now that the schools and colleges and universities have been doing their work for half a century and more, and a large class of educated men has grown up — men qualified to take a part in the government of the country, and desirous of taking such a part, there is no excuse whatever for maintaining the monopoly. For the last twenty years the Indian people have been agitating for a greater voice in the affairs of their country, through the Indian National Congress. The bureaucracy, however, pays little attention to what we say in India, and so my countrymen thought it desirable that an appeal should now be addressed direct to the electors of this country.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 193

*Lord Curzon's<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for Repression*

The natural evils inseparable from a foreign bureaucracy monopolising all power have, during the last ten years, been intensified by the reactionary policy of the Indian Government, and this reaction and repression has been the darkest during the last three years. You, Sir, have said, and I am glad you have said it, that my personal feeling towards Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> on whom the chief responsibility for the repression of the last three years mainly rests, is one of respect. That is so. I have been in his Council now for four years. And nobody could come in contact with him without being profoundly impressed by his great ability, his indefatigable energy, his high sense of duty, and his devotion to the interests of England, as he understands them. Lord Curzon is a brilliant and gifted man, and he has striven as hard as he could to promote, according to his lights, the interests of England in India. He has done several things for which he is entitled to great credit, but his main aim has been to strengthen the position of the Englishman in India, and weaken correspondingly the position of the Indian, so as to make it more and more difficult for the latter to urge his claim to that equality which has been promised him by Parliament and the Sovereign, and which it is his legitimate ambition to attain. You will find — and I am anxious to be fair to Lord Curzon — that while he has done a great deal of good work in certain directions — giving larger grants to irrigation, to agricultural education, and to primary education, putting down assaults by Europeans on Indians, rousing local governments to greater energy, and so on where he had to deal with the educated classes of the country and their legitimate position and aspiration, he has been reactionary, and even repressive. And it is this reaction and this repression that has driven my countrymen to a position bordering on despair.

*Reactionaryism has put India Back*

Let me explain my meaning to you in a few words. There are four fields in which the educated classes, that is to say, those who have received a Western education for we have our own Eastern learning, and men who receive that education are among the most learned in certain fields; but I am speaking now of Western education, because that education inspires one with an appreciation of free institutions — there are four fields in which the educated classes have been steadily making their influence felt and in all those four fields the reactionary policy of recent years has sought to put them back. In the first place, a little local self-government was given us by Lord Ripon<sup>2</sup> and these educated classes naturally exercise much influence in that limited field. Secondly, they are able to exercise some influence in the spread of higher education. Thirdly, they have a powerful Press, which, in spite of defects inseparable from a state of transition, is steadily gaining in weight and importance,

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16. <sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.

and its influence means the influence of educated Indians. Lastly, a few fairly high offices in the Public Service are held by Indians, almost everything worth having is monopolized by Englishmen, but a very few offices of some importance are allowed to be held by Indians, and appointments to these offices were hitherto made by means of an open competitive examination, with the result that men of ability, who are usually also men of independence, had an opportunity of entering the public service. Now in all these fields, Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> has put the clock back. Moreover, it is not only his measures, but also the manner in which he has forced them on the country about which my countrymen feel most bitter.

I think this has been the result of the limitations imposed upon him by his temperament and his training. In Mr. Morley's<sup>2</sup> life of Gladstone, one striking expression repeatedly occurs, it is what Mr. Gladstone calls "the profound principle of liberty." Mr. Gladstone says again and again that though Oxford had taught him many things, Oxford did not teach him an appreciation of the profound principle of liberty as a factor of human progress. Well, it seems other Oxford men, too, have not learnt how to appreciate that principle. Lord Curzon is no believer in free institutions, or in national aspirations. I believe if he were allowed a free hand he would hand the people of this country back to the rule of the aristocracy that governed here before 1832. Well, Lord Curzon sees that the educated classes of India are pressing forward more and more to be associated with the government of their own country, and he thinks it is not to the interest of England, as he understands that interest, that this should be so. He therefore has tried to put back these men in every one of the four fields of which I have spoken. He has tried to fetter the Press by his Official Secrets Act. In regard to higher education he has transferred the control of it to the hands of the officials and to such Indians as will always agree with the officials. Then, as regards the few fairly high offices open to us in our own country, he has abolished competition, and made everything dependent upon the pleasure of the officials, thereby enormously increasing official patronage, and making it more difficult for able and independent Indians to enter the public service of their own country. Lastly, he has tried to take away, especially in Bengal, a portion of that self-government which had been given to the people a quarter of a century ago.

### *Curzon Explained away the Proclamation*

As if all this retrogression were not sufficient, he ventured last year, in open Council, to explain away the Queen's Proclamation. Ladies and gentlemen, it is with difficulty that I can speak with due restraint of this offending of his. The Queen's Proclamation has hitherto been regarded, both for its contents and the circumstances connected with the issuing of it, with feelings of gratitude and satisfaction by the people of India. It was issued on the morrow of

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 16

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 23

the dark Mutiny by a Royal woman, in the name of a mighty nation, to a people who had just suffered most dreadful calamities in their own country. And I think England may well be proud of it for all time. The Proclamation assures the people of India that the Queen considered herself bound to them by the same ties which bound her to her other subjects in the Empire, that the prosperity and happiness of the Indian people was the sole aim of her rule, and that everything in India would be freely and equally open to all without distinction of race, or colour, or creed. It is thus that in practice this equality has been a mere legal fiction. But then even as a legal fiction it was a very important thing as laying down in theory the policy of a great nation towards a subject people.

Now, Lord Curzon, who dearly loves debating, thought it proper to attack the educated classes in regard to their constant reference to this Proclamation. He said, in effect : " You base your claim for equality on the Queen's Proclamation. But what does it promise you? It says that you will have equality when you are ' qualified ' for it. Now, here we have certain qualifications which can only be attained by heredity or race. Therefore, as you cannot acquire race, you really cannot have equality with Englishmen in India as long as British rule lasts. " Now, apart from the question of your national honour being involved in this — the explaining away of a " Sovereign's word ", look at the unwisdom, the stupendous unwisdom, of the whole thing, telling the people of India that unless they were content to remain permanently a subject race in their own country, their interests and those of British rule were not identical. After this, how can any Englishman complain if my countrymen regarded, as they have been latterly regarding, your rule in India as maintained, not to promote their interests, but for a selfish purpose?

But Lord Curzon has not stopped even at this. Some time ago he made a speech in Convocation at Calcutta, in which he attacked not only the educated classes of today, but also their ancestors, of whom he knows nothing, and the ideals of their race, of which every Indian is justly proud. And then on the top of these things has come the partition of Bengal.

### *Partition of Bengal*

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't wish to say anything tonight about the merits of the measure, now it has been carried out. I regret it profoundly. I think it has been a terrible mistake, and it will take long to undo its evil effects, if ever you are able to undo them. But I want to say a word about the manner in which the measure has been forced on that province. About two years ago Lord Curzon started the idea; and instantly there was strenuous opposition to it throughout the province. About 500 meetings were held in different parts in which the people begged Lord Curzon to leave them alone. For a time nothing more was heard of the proposal, and people thought Lord Curzon had abandoned the partition. A few months ago it was suddenly announced not only that the partition would take place, but that a much larger scheme than was origi-

nally proposed had been sanctioned by the Secretary of State. Now consider the position. The people had held 500 meetings, they had appealed to the Viceroy, they had appealed to the Secretary of State, they had sent a petition, signed by 60,000 persons, to the British House of Commons, and yet, in spite of all these things, this measure has been forced upon the people. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal says that he had consulted his senior officials, as if they were the only people to be consulted in a matter of this kind! No Indians were consulted, not even the men who never take part in politics, who are the friends of Viceroys and Lieutenant Governors, heads of distinguished families, not one even of these was consulted and you find all these men ranged against the partition today. Now is this the way British rule is to be maintained in India after a hundred years?

It is this which has driven the people of Bengal to the present feeling of despair. The majority of people there have lost their faith in the character of your rule, and that to my mind is a serious situation. Now though the main part of the responsibility for this state of things must rest on Lord Curzon, after all it is your system of administration in India that has enabled him to attempt all this repression. My quarrel, therefore, is less with him personally, or with the officials, than with the system—this bureaucratic system, this monopoly of power by officials. Many of these officials are, no doubt, conscientious men, who are trying to do their duty according to their lights. But I contend that these lights are dim. Their highest idea of British rule is efficiency. They think that if they give India an efficient administration the whole of their duty is discharged. But this really is not the whole duty, nor even the main duty, which England has professed to undertake in India. But you have pledged your word before God and man to so govern India as to enable the Indian people to govern themselves according to the higher standards of the West. If your policy is not directed to this end, I shall consider you have failed. I recognize the enormous difficulties, but I say, for one thing, your faces should be set in one direction and one direction only, and there must be no attempt at turning back.

### *Limitations of the Bureaucratic System*

Again, even as regards efficiency, my own conviction is that it is impossible for the present system to produce more than a certain very limited amount of efficiency, and that standard has now been already reached. The higher efficiency, which comes of self government, that you can never secure under a bureaucratic system. There are obvious disadvantages inseparable from the system. I will mention only three of them. In the first place, there is nobody in the Government who is permanently identified with the interests of the people. It is a strongly centralized system and all initiation of important measures can only come from the centre. The centre, however, consists of men who only hold power for five years and then come away here. It is impossible for them to study vast and complicated problems affecting three hundred



millions of people and attempt to deal with them during their time. And when they come away, other men who take their place have to begin where they did, and are deterred by the same difficulty. The Civil Service, taken as a body, is very strong, but each member of it individually is not important enough, owing to the centralized character of the system, to be able to initiate any large measure. Then, as soon as these men have earned their pension, they return to this country. And thus the knowledge and experience acquired by them at the expense of the country, which might have been useful to the people after their retirement, if they had remained in India, is wholly lost to the country, and this goes on generation after generation. When these men come back to this country, they get lost in the crowd, their knowledge and experience finding, perhaps, occasional expression in a letter to the newspapers. The result is that large questions affecting the welfare of the people are generally left to themselves, we, who are permanently in India, have no voice in the Government, and can initiate nothing, and this is the first great disadvantage of the system, even from the standpoint of efficiency.

The second disadvantage is that which comes of the exclusion of the educated classes from power. This class is steadily growing, and unless you close your schools, colleges, and universities, it will continue to grow. And with the growth of this class, larger and larger grows the number of men who are discontented with the present state of things. Public opinion is practically limited to these men in the first instance, but what they think today the whole country thinks tomorrow. And there is no other public opinion in the country. Now you never can get much efficiency with the whole country in a discontented frame of mind. Lastly, the officials look at every question from the standpoint of their own power. They jealously guard their own monopoly of power, and subordinate everything to this consideration. The interests of the services are thus allowed to take precedence of the interests of the people. You thus see the revenue of the country eaten up by the enormous and steadily growing military expenditure, the increasing Home Charges, and the extravagant salaries paid to the English officials, while next to nothing is spent on primary education, and industrial education is absolutely neglected. In the old times, when your rule had to be consolidated, and Western standards had to be introduced into the country, your work was done in a manner which secured the gratitude of the people; but that gratitude is, I fear, now over. The new generation does not know what was done two generations ago. They only know your rule as it now is, and they only see your officials enjoying a monopoly of power and resisting all the legitimate efforts of the people to participate in that power. New generations are thus growing up full of bitterness for the exclusion of which they have every right to complain. They see the marvellous rise of Japan, and they see that while in Japan, the whole weight of the government has been thrown on the side of popular progress, in India the whole weight of the government has been against popular progress. Now I want you to consider whether such a state of things can be indefinitely prolonged. And,

after all, though the bureaucracy actually exercises power, it is on you, the people of this country, that the real responsibility for the government of India rests. I am aware that much good has been done by England in India in certain directions. The Western type of the administrative machinery had been substituted in place of what we once had. The country enjoys now uninterrupted peace and order. Justice, though costly, is fairly dispensed, as between Indian and Indian, though when it comes to be a matter between Indian and Englishman, it is quite another story. Then you have introduced Western education, with freedom of speech and freedom of writing. These are all things that stand to your credit.

### *Evils of British Rule*

Side by side with these there have been great evils. One such evil is a steady dwarfing of the race in consequence of its exclusion from power. Our natural abilities, owing to sheer disuse, are growing less and less, and this stunting, is, in my opinion, an enormous evil. Another evil is economic, and there I hold strongly British rule has produced disastrous results. On this point, I claim some right to speak, for I have been studying this phase of the question for nearly twenty years now. Now, as a temporary necessity of a state of transition, even these great evils might be borne, though they are undoubtedly most serious. But when your bureaucracy attempts to make the present arrangements permanent, the position is simply impossible.

### *Self-Government — the Only Solution*

The only solution that is possible — a solution demanded alike by our interests and by your interests — as also by your national honour, is the steady introduction of self-government in India, substituting the Indian, for the English agency, expanding and reforming the Legislative Councils till they become in reality true controlling bodies, and letting the people generally manage their own affairs themselves. The task, though difficult, is not impossible. What is needed is large statesmanship and a resolute determination to see to it that the pledges given to the people of India are redeemed within a reasonable span of time. The bureaucracy, no doubt, will not like to part with power, and will do everything it can to thwart this consummation. But, after all, they are only the servants of the British people, and when you have definitely made up your minds they will be bound to carry out your policy. I appeal to you, ladies and gentlemen, to realize the great responsibility that rests on you in this matter. Already the difficulties have been gravely aggravated, and unless radical remedies are applied at once everything might be too late. I earnestly trust that you will be guided aright in your judgment, and in that faith I have addressed you tonight.

## ENGLAND'S DUTY TO INDIA

*The following is the full text of the speech delivered on November 15, 1905 by Gokhale at the National Liberal Club, London :*

### *Liberalism in England and India*

I feel very grateful to the Political Committee of the National Liberal Club for their kind invitation to me to address them this evening on the subject of India. Political reformers in India are, in one sense, the natural allies of the Liberal Party in England; for we, in India, are struggling to assert in our own country those very principles which are now the accepted creed of the Liberal Party in England. Peace, retrenchment and reform are our watch-words, as they are yours. We are like you seeking to throw open to the unprivileged many the advantages which at present are a monopoly of the privileged few; and we are fighting against the predominance of the interests of a class over those of the mass of the people. It is true that I use the word 'allies' only in a limited sense — in the sense of parties that have a common aim, even though they do not take joint or common action in pursuing that aim. And I recognize that, as things are, we can't claim to be allies of the Liberal Party in any fuller sense of the term, for the simple reason that we have nothing to offer the Liberal Party in return for what it can do for us, except the gratitude and attachment of a helpless people, and this may not count for much in the eyes of many. However, of one thing I am certain — that we are entitled to look for sympathy and support from the Liberal Party when we address our appeal to that party for a large and steadily increasing measure of self-government being conceded to the people of India.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now, roughly speaking, a hundred years since the destinies of India and England came to be linked together. How we came under your rule is a question into which no useful purpose will be served by enquiring on an occasion like this. But two things I wish to say for my countrymen. First that, because we came under the rule of foreigners, it does not mean that we are like some savage or semi-civilized people whom you have subjugated. The people of India are an ancient race who had attained a high degree of civilization long before the ancestors of European nations understood what civilization was. India has been the birth-place of great religions. She was also the cradle, and long the home of literature and philosophy, of science and arts. But God does not give everything to every people and India in the past was not known for that love of liberty and that appreciation of free institutions which one finds to be so striking a characteristic of the West. Secondly, because the Indians are under the rule of foreigners, it does not follow that they are lacking in what is called the martial spirit; for some of

the best troops that fight the battles of the Empire today are drawn from the Indians themselves. I mention these two things because I want you to recognize that though we have lost our independence, we have not, on that account, quite forfeited our title to the respect and consideration of civilized people. Your earlier race of statesmen indeed never failed to recognize this freely. They perceived the finger of Providence in the succession of events which ultimately set a small island at one end of the world to rule over a great country at another end of the world, and they were quite sincere when they stated that they regarded India as a solemn trust and that they would administer the country in the spirit in which all trust ought to be administered, *i. e.* with the sole object of promoting the best interests of the Indians themselves. Well, a hundred years have now elapsed since then and no one can charge us with being in a hurry to pronounce an opinion, if we now pass under review the results of your hundred years' rule in India.

### *Consolidation of British Rule*

The first task that confronted your statesmen in India was naturally the consolidation of your rule, and this they proceeded to effect by introducing into that country the appliances of your material civilization and by elaborating there an administrative machinery conforming to the type that prevails in the West. And, on the whole, this work has been extremely well done. The country is now covered with Railways and Post Offices and Telegraphs. Peace and order reign throughout the land. Justice, though costly, is fairly administered as between Indian and Indian, though, when it comes to be a matter between Indian and Englishman, it is another story. Of course, the machinery of administration that has been evolved is by no means perfect — there are obvious defects of a serious character which need not be there — but, on the whole, I repeat this part of your work has been extremely well done and you are entitled to regard it with a just sense of satisfaction.

### *Policy of Conciliation*

Side by side with consolidation, your statesmen had to undertake another work — that of conciliation. And this work of reconciling the people of India to the rule of foreigners — a difficult and delicate task — has also been satisfactorily accomplished. This result has been achieved by Parliament and the Sovereign of England enunciating a noble policy towards India and by the introduction into that country of what is known as Western education — the same kind of education that is given to your youths in your schools and colleges — an education that, among other things, inspires one with a love of free institutions. Three quarters of a century ago, your Parliament passed an Act, known as the Charter Act of 1833, laying down the principle on which the government of India was to be based. And twenty-five years later the late Queen addressed a Proclamation to the people of India reiterating the same policy. The Charter Act of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858 pledge

the word of your Parliament and your Sovereign to the people of India — and these are the only two authorities that can speak in your name — that the sole aim of British rule in India is the promotion of the interest of the Indian people and that in the government of the country, there would be equality for the two races, no disability of any kind being imposed on any one by reason merely of race or colour or creed. A policy so enunciated was bound to win all hearts and it went a long way to reconcile the people of India to your rule.

### *Western Education*

Along with this enunciation of the principles of your government, came the opening of schools and colleges such as you have in your own country and it is a remarkable fact that the three older Universities of India were established almost during the dark days of the Mutiny. Be it remembered, also, that the gates of Western knowledge were thrown open to us with a clear anticipation of the results that were likely to follow; and in a well-known speech Lord Macaulay<sup>1</sup> used memorable language in this connection. He observed that it was perhaps inevitable that the people of India, having been brought up on Western knowledge, would in course of time demand European institutions in the government of their country, and he said :

Whether such a day will ever come I know not; but never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history.

### *Stage of Reconstruction*

Thus your declared policy towards India and the introduction of Western education, joined to your higher Western standards of government, effected the work of conciliation in a satisfactory manner, and twenty years ago, an Englishman going out to India would have found on every side a frank acceptance by the people of British rule as their national rule, as they then fully believed that, under that rule, they would be allowed to work out their own salvation and eventually attain the colonial type of self-government — so that they could remain within your Empire and yet have a position worthy of their self-respect. And if today this faith has been seriously weakened, it is because your statesmen have now been hesitating at the third stage that has become inevitable after consolidation and conciliation — the stage of reconstruction. When you first started your work in India, when Western standards of administration had to be introduced into the country and there was no Western education to enable us to understand those standards, it was, perhaps, indispensable that all power should be lodged in the hands of a few English officials. But now that the schools and colleges and universities

<sup>1</sup> LORD MACAULAY (1800-1859); member, Viceroy's executive council (1834-38); President, Commission for composing a Criminal Procedure Code for India (1835).

have been doing their work for half a century and more, and when a large and steadily increasing class of men educated after the Western model — a class qualified and anxious to take part in the administration of the country — has come into existence, you must reconstruct the foundations of your rule so as to find room for these men inside the administration, if the pledges given in your name are intended to be redeemed. Unfortunately it is here that the statesmen responsible for the government of India are hesitating, with results which already threaten to be disastrous.

### *Grant of Local Self Government*

Twenty-five years ago, indeed, a noble attempt was made by a great English man, who went out to rule there as Viceroy, at such reconstruction and his name is cherished to the present day with feelings of the deepest affection and gratitude throughout India. Lord Ripon<sup>1</sup> — that is that Viceroy's name — strove hard and manfully for five years to liberalize the foundations of British rule in India and introduce, to some extent, those changes in the administration of the country which the people had been led to expect and which the spread of Western education among them had rendered inevitable. He gave the country a little local self government, he gave an important stimulus to education, and he tried to remove some of those glaring inequalities between the Indian and the Englishman which at present prevail in that country. What was the result? He exposed himself to such fierce persecution at the hands of his own countrymen in India, that no successor of his has ventured to repeat his experiment.

### *Repression Can Never Succeed*

Not only that, during the last few years a reactionary policy has been pursued towards the educated class of the country and this reaction has taken the form of active repression during the last three years of Lord Curzon's<sup>2</sup> administration. Now, I want you to see that such repression can never succeed. According to the last census, there are a million men in India today who have come under the influence of some sort of English education. You cannot hope to keep this large and growing class shut out completely from power as at present. Even if it were possible to perpetuate the present monopoly of power by the bureaucracy, your national honour demands that such an attempt should not be made. But it is not possible and any attempt to achieve the impossible can only end in disaster. Already great harm has been done. The faith of my countrymen in British rule, so strong at one time, had been seriously weakened and large numbers of young men are coming forward who do not believe in it at all. The situation is one that must fill all thoughtful minds with serious apprehensions about the future, and unless you here realize it properly, it is difficult to see how it is to mend.

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 32

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 16

*Monopoly of Power in British Hands*

Ladies and gentlemen, I have admitted that your countrymen are entitled to great credit for having introduced into an Oriental country the Western type of the machinery of administration. But, after all, such machinery is a means to an end—it is not the end in itself. It is, therefore necessary to consider how far the best interests—material and moral—of the people of India have been promoted by your administration during the last hundred years. This in reality is the main test—I had almost said the supreme test. If the results, judged by this test, were satisfactory, however much one might object on principle to the present form of government maintained in India, there would be something to be said in its favour. If, on the other hand, these results are found to be on the whole unsatisfactory, for the sake of your national honour as also in the interest of the Indian people themselves, a reconsideration of the existing arrangements becomes necessary. Let us first consider the moral results. These, it will be found, are of a mixed character. There is a great deal in them which you may regard with satisfaction and even pride. The blessings of peace, the establishment of law and order, the introduction of Western education, and the freedom of speech and the appreciation of liberal institutions that have followed in its wake—all these are things that stand to the credit of your rule. On the other hand, there are great evils too, and of these none, to my mind, is so great as the continuous dwarfing or stunting of our race that is taking place under your rule. Our rigorous exclusion from all power and all positions of trust and responsibility on a scale never before attempted in the history of humanity, involving, as it does, an enforced disuse of our national abilities—is leading to a steady deterioration of our race, and this, I venture to think, is a cruel, an iniquitous wrong you are inflicting upon us.

*Unsatisfactory Moral Results*

According to a Parliamentary return published in 1892, there are in India altogether about 2,400 offices carrying a salary of £700 and upwards, and of these only about 60 are held by Indians, and even most of these are of a comparatively low level. Another great evil is indicated by the present political status of the Indian people. All the three hundred millions of them put together have not got, under the constitution, as much power as a single elector in England to affect the position of the Government. Then the entire population is kept disarmed and as though it was not enough humiliation to the Indians to be deprived thus of their natural right to bear arms in defence of their hearths and homes, England has recently entered into an alliance with another Oriental nation—a nation that has borrowed much in the past from India—to repel foreign aggression on the borders of India and, incidentally, to perpetuate the present state of bondage for the Indians themselves. This is our position in our own country. If we go to your self-governing Colonies like Natal, we are treated as outside the pale of civilization, and they object to our walk-

ing on the footpaths, or travelling in first-class carriages, or in seeking accommodation at hotels ' In Crown Colonies like the Transvaal, our humiliation is even more complete Among the reasons for which you went to war with those two Boer Republics, wiping them, in the end, out of existence, you made rather prominent mention of certain ordinances which the Boer Governments had promulgated against the Indians residing within their territories But though these ordinances existed on paper in the time of the Boer Republics, they never were actually enforced, because those Governments were afraid of the mighty arm of England that they thought was behind the Indians But now that the territories have become Crown Colonies, and are under the control of the English Colonial Office, these same ordinances, incredible as it may seem are being rigorously enforced against us If this is our position in your Empire after our having been a hundred years under your rule, I am sure no one will pretend that the moral results of your rule may be regarded with satisfaction

### *Disastrous Economic Results*

Let us now turn to the material results and here, I am sorry to say, the verdict is even more emphatic against your rule I firmly believe, and I say this after a careful study of about twenty years of the question, that the economic results of British rule in India have been absolutely disastrous That the mass of the people in India are at present sunk in frightful poverty is now admitted by all, including the most inveterate official optimist A few facts, however, may be mentioned to bring this home clearly to your minds Your average annual income has been estimated at about £42 per head Ours, according to official estimates, is about £2 per head and according to non-official estimates, only a little more than £1 per head Your imports per head are about £13, ours about 5s per head The total deposits in your Postal Savings Bank amount to 148 million sterling and you have in addition in the Trustees Savings Banks about 52 million sterling Our Postal Savings Bank deposits with a population seven times as large as yours, are only about 7 million sterling and even of this a little over one tenth is held by Europeans Your total paid-up capital of joint stock companies is about 1,900 million sterling Ours is not quite 26 million sterling and the greater part of this again is European Four-fifths of our people are dependent upon agriculture and agriculture has been for some time steadily deteriorating Indian agriculturists are too poor and are, moreover, too heavily indebted to be able to apply any capital to land, and the result is that over the greater part of India, agriculture is, as Sir James Caird<sup>1</sup> pointed out more than twenty-five years ago, only a process of exhaustion of the soil The yield per acre is steadily diminishing being now only

<sup>1</sup> A member of the Famine Commission (presided over by General R. Strachey) appointed by the Government of India (1878) His book, *India The Land and the People*, gives his impressions of what he saw in the course of the famine inquiry



about 8 to 9 bushels an acre against about 30 bushels here in England; the losses of the agricultural community during the famines of the last eight years in crops and cattle have, according to a competent Commission, amounted to 200 million sterling. Forty millions of people, according to one great Anglo-Indian authority—Sir William Hunter<sup>1</sup>—pass through life with only one meal a day. According to another authority—Sir Charles Elliot<sup>2</sup>—seventy millions of people in India do not know what it is to have their hunger fully satisfied even once in the whole course of the year. The poverty of the people of India, thus considered by itself, is truly appalling. And if this is the state of things after a hundred years of your rule, you cannot claim that your principal aim in India has been the promotion of the interests of the Indian people.

### *Rising Mortality Rates*

But this is not all. I think there is ample evidence to show that even this deplorable condition of the mass of people in India has been further deteriorating steadily. Thus famines are growing more frequent, their extent is larger and the suffering they occasion more acute and widespread. Then during the last seven years, the plague has been ravaging the country in addition to famines. Now to those who consider the matter superficially, the plague may appear to be only a Providential scourge. But it really carries away hundreds of thousands of people, because, owing to constant underfeeding, the people have not got the stamina to resist the attacks of plague. Then it will be found that in the last decade of the 19th century, the population in the older provinces of India has been stationary and in some of them it has even declined! But the most conclusive testimony on this point—a testimony that there is no getting over—is supplied by the death-rate of the country. Let us take the last twenty years—I take this long period of twenty years, because we shall not then be open to the charge that we have only taken a few years rendered abnormal by famine or plague—and to emphasize the situation, let us compare the movement of the death-rate in India with that of the death-rate in England during the same time. Let us divide these twenty years into four periods of five years each—that is the only way to present a fairly reliable generalization—and what do we find? In the first period of five years our average annual death-rate was between 24 and 25 per thousand; yours at that

<sup>1</sup> WILLIAM WILSON HUNTER, I.C.S. (1840-1900); historian and publicist; organiser, Statistical Survey of India (1869-81), the compilation reaching 128 volumes condensed into the Imperial Gazetteer of India, 9 volumes; additional member, Viceroy's Legislative Council (1881-87); member, Indian Finance Commission (1886), author of *A History of India*.

<sup>2</sup> CHARLES ALFRED ELLIOTT (1835-1911), I.C.S., Secretary, North-West Provinces Government (1870-77); Famine Commissioner, Mysore (1877); Census Commissioner (1880); Chief Commissioner, Assam (1881); President, committee for retrenchment of public expenditure (1886); member, Supreme Council (1887-90); Lt.-Governor, Bengal (1890-95).

time was about 20 per thousand. In the next five years, ours rose from under 25 to about 28 per thousand. Yours, on the other hand, owing to the greater attention paid to the condition of life of the working classes, fell from 20 to between 18 and 19. In the third period of five years, our death-rate further mounted from 28 to 30 per thousand. Yours again came down from over 18 to about 17. Finally, in the last period, ours went up still higher — from 30 to about 32, while yours has fallen still further from 17 to less than 16. For the last year ours stands, according to the Statistical Abstract for British India recently published, at about 35 per thousand. Thus during the last twenty years, while your death rate has been steadily declining, ours has risen by no less than 10 per thousand, which, on a population of three hundred millions, means three million deaths annually more than was the case twenty years ago. Surely this is a frightful sum of human misery and you must find out where the responsibility for it is, for there must be responsibility somewhere. I think I need not say anything more on the subject of the material condition of India.

To any one who looks beneath the surface, this fearful impoverishment was bound to result from the peculiar character of British rule. The administration by a foreign agency is so costly and the dominant position of the Englishman in every field gives him such an advantage in acquiring wealth in India, that a large drain of wealth has continuously gone on for years and years from India to England. During the last forty years, the net excess of our exports over imports has amounted to about a thousand million pounds. No country — and least of all a poor country like India — can stand so large a drain, and steady impoverishment has been the natural consequence.

### *Self-Government — Only Remedy*

Well, things cannot go on at this rate for long, and the only remedy for the state of things must be sought in the steady association of the people of India with the administration of their own affairs till at last the colonial type of government is reached. As things are managed at present, the real interests of the people do not occupy the first place nor the second place nor even the third place on the slate of Government. Nearly half the net revenue is eaten up by army charges. Large salaries are paid to English officials and the charge on their account is steadily rising. Nearly one third of the net revenue is withdrawn from India to be spent in this country for purposes of the Government. Railway extension has taken precedence of irrigation in the past, because English capitalists are interested in the former. The progress of the people is obviously bound up with the spread of primary education — but how little so far has been done may be seen from the fact that, at the present moment four villages out of every five are without a school-house and seven children out of eight are growing up in darkness and all the moral helplessness which comes of such darkness. The greatest need of the hour at present in India is industrial education, and yet there is not a single decent technical institute

in the whole country. The truth is, there is nobody at present in the Government of India whose interests are permanently identified with those of the people. As long as this state of things continues, it is hopeless to expect that large questions which are urgently pressing for solution and which must be dealt with in a statesmanlike manner with the sole aim of promoting the interests of the people — such as the spread of primary education and of industrial education, the fearful indebtedness of the peasantry and such others — will receive the attention they require.

### *From Bureaucracy to Democracy*

Ladies and gentlemen, I think I have said enough to establish to you the necessity of reconstructing the present bureaucratic form of administration in India on more liberal lines so as to associate the people of the country with that administration. At present there is no real control on the actions of this bureaucracy anywhere. We in India have, of course, no control whatever. The Secretary of State for India is expected to control the administration generally but he is a man who has never been to India and has, therefore, no personal knowledge of anything. The constitution, recognizing this disadvantage, has given him a Council of ten members to advise him. But as there is no Indian on this Council, and most members are retired Anglo-Indian officials, the bias of the Council is all in favour of the purely official regime. Parliament in theory has the power of controlling the Government of India, but the Secretary of State for India, being a member of the Cabinet, can always count on a standing majority to support him and the control of Parliament thus becomes purely nominal. There is thus practically no real control anywhere, and every Liberal must admit that this is a very serious evil. Well, what the people of India ask now is that they themselves may be given an opportunity to exercise some sort of control over the Government. We recognize the enormous difficulties of the position and we don't ask for democratic institutions at once.

### *Our Immediate Demands*

Our immediate demands are, in fact, so moderate, that you will, I have no doubt, be astonished at our moderation. Take the Viceroy's Legislative Council in India. It consists of 25 members of whom only 4 are elected Indians. This Council is allowed to discuss the finances of the country one day in the year, but there is, of course, no real discussion and no votes are taken and no amendments allowed to be moved, as the Budget has not to be passed. Well, we ask, in the first place, that half the number of this Council should be elected and the other half nominated by Government, the Viceroy, moreover, retaining the power of veto. We further ask that the Budget should be passed formally, and that we should have the right to move amendments, the right for the present being limited to, say, one amendment each member. This is as regards the Viceroy's Council. In the smaller Provincial Councils, we ask for larger

opportunities to influence the administration of the finances, as the Provincial Governments deal only with internal affairs. Then we ask that of the ten members of the Secretary of State's Council, at least three should be Indians, so that he should have an opportunity to understand the Indian view of things before he makes up his mind on any question. Finally, we ask that at least half a dozen Indians—two for each of the three leading Indian Provinces—should be allowed to sit in the House of Commons. Six in a House of 670 will not introduce any disturbing factor, and we certainly shall not affect the fate of ministries. But, in the first place, such representation will definitely associate us with a body which controls the whole Empire and will thereby raise our status. Secondly, the House will have an opportunity to know first hand the Indian view of things, and though we may be only six, when we are unanimous we shall represent a moral force which it will not be easy to ignore. It may be said that if India is allowed representation in the House of Commons the Colonies will ask for the same. But the Colonies have their own Parliaments and the English House of Commons is not expected to exercise any direct control over their Governments. I may mention that the French Colonies send deputies to the French Chamber. These, ladies and gentlemen, are our immediate demands. Of course, these measures will have to be supplemented by a large amount of decentralization of authority in India, providing checks on the actions of the bureaucracy on the spot. But for this our agitation must be in India and not in England. I trust you are satisfied that we are aiming at nothing revolutionary and that what we are immediately asking for is only a small instalment in the direction of self government. The time is more than ripe for such an instalment being conceded, and I trust our appeal to the Liberal Party of England for its sympathy and support in the matter will not have been addressed to it in vain.

## SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR INDIA

*On July 11, 1906 Gokhale read the following paper before the East India Association, London :*

### *Ferment in India*

My object in addressing you is to state before this Association briefly, and I hope clearly, what are today the ideas and aspirations of the vast majority of those Indians who have come under the influence of Western thought in regard to the government of their country. I think it will be generally admitted that the dissatisfaction in India with the existing system of administration has been for some time past rapidly growing, and we have now reached a stage when it is necessary for the rulers, if further alienation between the two sides is to be prevented, to make a bold and statesmanlike attempt to win back the confidence of the educated classes of the country. These classes have in the past been led to believe that the sole aim of British rule in India was the welfare of the Indian people, and that, under that rule, no distinction would be made between Indians and Europeans in the government of the country on grounds of race or creed or colour. The Charter Act of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858 of the late Queen have pledged the word of the Sovereign and the Parliament of the country — the only two authorities that can claim to speak in the name of the English nation — to such a policy. And till a few years ago, whatever might have been thought of the pace at which we were going, there was no general disposition to doubt the intention of the rulers to redeem their plighted word. Today, however, the position is no longer the same. Things have moved even in dreamy and contemplative India, and many of the members of this Association who, in their time, have held high, and, in some cases, distinguished, official positions in that country, must have been startled recently to read in the columns of such eminently Conservative journals as *The Times* and *The Morning Post* the accounts of the ferment in India witnessed by their special correspondents, and the significance they found it necessary to attach to that ferment. There is no doubt that the old faith of the people in the character and ideals of British rule has been more than shaken, and its place is being steadily taken by a conviction that, however great England may be, she is not great enough to forego voluntarily the gains of power from considerations of mere justice or national honour. I do not say that such a view is quite just to the average man or woman of this country. Probably the democracy here will not tolerate such complete exclusion of the Indians from their own government, if the real character of the present system of administration is clearly brought home to its mind. But whatever its sympathies in the abstract may be, they are rendered inoperative, first, by its absorption in questions of domestic

interest, and, secondly, by the dense and impenetrable ignorance about India that prevails in this land on all sides. Moreover, the people of India can judge of the intentions of Englishmen only from their experience of those who go out to India to exercise authority over them, and I think it is no injustice to this class to say that most of its members show no particular anxiety to part with any portion of the power they at present enjoy, or to associate more than they can help the people of the country with themselves in the work of administration.

### *Influence of Educated Classes*

I know there are those who think that no serious importance need be attached to the temper or opinions of the educated classes of India—first, because, numerically, they are a small—as one Viceroy said, “a microscopic”—minority, and, secondly, because there are so many caste and creed divisions in India that united action on the part of the people in support of the views of the educated classes is impossible. It is true that, as far as mere numbers go, those who have received Western education in India form but a small proportion of the entire population, only a little over a million persons being returned at the last census as “literate in English” out of nearly three hundred millions. But there can be no greater mistake than to imagine that the influence of this class in the country is proportionate only to its numbers. In the first place, these men constitute what may be called the brain of the community. They do the thinking not only for themselves, but also for their ignorant brethren. Moreover, theirs is the Indian press—both English and Vernacular—and the Vernacular press shapes the thoughts and sways the feelings, not only of the fifteen million “literate in Vernaculars” whom it reaches directly, but also of many more millions who come indirectly under its influence. And whatever public opinion exists in the country reflects almost entirely the views of the educated classes. Officials sometimes look to old historic families, which in more turbulent times supplied leaders to the country, to exert a rival influence, but they have now lost their former hold on the public mind, because in these days of peace and of transition, rusty, broken swords cannot compete with ideas as a source of importance and power. The influence of the educated classes with their countrymen is thus already very great, and is bound every day to grow greater and greater. As regards caste and creed divisions, even these are not now so acute as they once were. Half a century of Western education, and a century of common laws, common administration, common grievances, and common disabilities, have not failed to produce their natural effect even in India. The awakening of the Mahomedans of Aligarh to the necessity of political agitation is a significant sign of the times. It is most improbable that the Aligarh programme, when drawn up, will be found to be substantially different from the Congress programme, and though the new organization may maintain its separate existence for a while, it must inevitably

merge itself sooner or later into the larger and older organization of the National Congress.

*Changing Attitude Towards British Rule*

I think those who are responsible for the government of India have now got to realize two facts : that any further alienation of the educated classes would be a course of supreme political unwisdom; and, secondly, that such alienation cannot be prevented unless the faith of these classes in the desire of the rulers to carry out the policy of the Charter Act of 1833, and the Proclamation of 1858 is restored. Whatever a certain school of officials in India may say, the bulk of educated Indians have never in the past desired severance of the British connection. Not only was their reason enlisted on its side, but in the earlier years, at any rate, even their imagination had been captured by it. The fact that a small island at one end of the world had by an astonishing succession of events been set to rule over a vast country, inhabited by an ancient and civilized race, at the other end; the character of the new rulers as men who had achieved constitutional liberty for themselves, and who were regarded as friends of freedom all over the world; their noble declarations of policy in regard to India—these were well calculated to cast a spell on the Indian mind; while the blessings of continued peace and order well established, the introduction into the country of the higher and more vigorous administrative standards of the West, the establishment of universities and schools, throwing open to the people the rich treasures of Western knowledge, and bringing them under the influence of Western ideas, the dispensing of equal justice between Indian and Indian, liberty of speech and liberty of writing, railways, post offices, telegraphs, and other modern appliances of material civilization—these were solid and undeniable advantages brought to the people, which for a long time continued to be a theme of genuine and unstinted appreciation. The spell, however, is already broken, and even the hold on the reason is steadily slackening. A tendency has set in to depreciate even those advantages which at one time were most cordially acknowledged. And the disadvantages of the situation—wounded self-respect, inability to grow to the full height of one's stature, a steady deterioration in the manhood of the nation, and economic evils of vast magnitude inseparable from such foreign domination—these evils which, while the spell lasted, had not been realized with sufficient clearness, have now already begun to appear as intolerable. I think there is no room for doubt that the whole attitude of the Indian mind towards British rule is undergoing a change. As yet the majority does not clearly understand this change. It would like to remain, if it could, in the old familiar groove, and it feels surprised, pained, disappointed, indignant that it cannot remain in that groove, and is being driven in a direction which it does not understand. It is a critical juncture in the relations between England and India. The highest statesmanship is needed to deal with the situation, and every day the problem grows more and more difficult of solution.

*Lord Curzon's<sup>1</sup> Grave Mistake*

After all, India's willing acceptance of the British connection can only be based on reason or enlightened self-interest. English officials in India often fail to realize the extent to which the policy laid down by the Sovereign and by Parliament has reconciled the thinking portion of the Indian community to British rule. They seem to think that, as that policy has been allowed hitherto to remain for the most part a dead letter, it could not really have any serious practical bearing. There cannot be a more complete misconception of the whole situation than this. Throughout these long years the educated classes have not lost sight of the policy even for a single moment, and though their patience under its continued non fulfilment—which at last has begun to give way—has worn to superficial observers the appearance of indifference, the belief that the pledges so solemnly given would not go unredeemed has, more than anything else, determined so long their attitude towards British rule. Once this attitude is allowed to undergo a change, such as it is now doing, the rulers will not be left long in doubt as to the great part which the Charter Act and the Queen's Proclamation have had in insuring the loyalty of the people. It was the failure to perceive this which was responsible for the grave mistake which Lord Curzon committed more than two years ago, when he sought in open Council to explain away the Queen's Proclamation, and practically told the people of India that, as long as British rule lasted, there could be no real equality between Englishmen and Indians in India.

*Efficiency True and False*

It is sometimes said that the existing arrangements make for efficiency of administration and in the interests of that efficiency it is necessary that they should not be disturbed. There is an air of plausibility about this plea, but those who urge it ignore the wisdom of an observation which the present Prime Minister<sup>2</sup> once made, that "good government could never be a substitute for government by the people themselves." On a closer examination, moreover, the contention will be found to be perfectly untenable. The efficiency attained by a foreign bureaucracy, uncontrolled by public opinion, whose members, again, reside only temporarily in the land in which they exercise official power, is bound to be of a strictly limited character, and it can never compare with that higher and truer efficiency which is possible only under a well regulated system of self government. The present form of administration in India is a strongly centralized bureaucracy in which the men at the centre hold office for five years only. They then leave the country, carrying away with them all the knowledge and experience of administrative matters acquired at the expense of the country, and their places are taken by new men, who,

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 16

<sup>2</sup> SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN (1836-1908), Prime Minister of England (1905-1908)



in their turn, retire similarly after five years. As things are, there is no one ever in the government who is permanently interested in the country as only its own people can be interested. One result is that the true well-being of the people is systematically subordinated to militarism, service interests of English mercantile classes; and though under such a system peace and order may be maintained, and even a certain amount of efficient administration secured, the type of efficiency is bound to remain a low one always. Moreover, it is clear that even such efficiency of administration, as has been attained in the past by the existing system, is bound to suffer more and more, owing to the growing antagonism of the governed to that system. No man, for instance, ever laboured more strenuously for mere efficiency than Lord Curzon, and yet never was discontent deeper and more widespread than when he left India, and no Viceroy of recent times has had to succeed to a greater legacy of difficulties than Lord Minto.<sup>1</sup>

### *Self-Government within the Empire*

It may be that bureaucracies, like the Bourbons never learn, but it should really not be difficult for Englishmen to realize that you cannot have institutions like the universities working for more than half a century in India, and then expect to be able to govern the people, as though they were still strangers to ideas of constitutional freedom or to the dignity of national aspirations. Those who blindly uphold the existing system, and resist all attempts, however cautious and moderate, to broaden its bases, prefer practically to sacrifice the future to the present. No one denies the undoubted difficulties of the position, but they are by no means so formidable as those who do not want to move at all like to believe. The goal which the educated classes of India have in view is a position for their country in the Empire worthy of the self-respect of civilised people. They want their country to be a prosperous, self-governing integral part of the Empire, like the Colonies, and not a mere poverty-stricken, bureaucratically-held possession of that Empire. The system under which India is governed at present is an unnatural system, and however one may put up with it as a temporary evil, as a permanent arrangement it is impossible, for under such a system "the noble, free, virile, fearlesslike," to use the words of a well-known American preacher, "which is the red blood of any nation gradually becomes torpid," and nothing can compensate a people for so terrible a wrong.

### *Advance from Experiment to Experiment*

Of course, we recognize that the new self-government has to be on Western lines, and therefore the steps by which the goal is reached must necessarily be slow, as, for the advance to be real, it must be from experiment to experiment only. But there is all the difference in the world between such cautious

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 71.

progress and no progress at all, and the bureaucracy which, by standing in the way of all reasonable instalments of reform, hopes to prevent reform altogether, is only undermining its own position by such a short sighted and suicidal policy. The officials in theory admit the necessity of associating the people with the Government of the country, but they object to admitting only a small proportion of the population to a share in the administration, and they ask us to wait till the mass of the people have been qualified by education to take an intelligent part in public affairs! At the same time, how much or how little is being done to push on mass education may be seen from the fact that, after more or less a century of British rule, and forty years after England herself woke up to the responsibilities of Governments in regard to mass education, seven children out of eight in India are growing up to-day in ignorance and darkness, and four villages out of five are as yet without a school house! Moreover, it is ignored that what is asked at the present stage is a voice in the administration, not for the whole population, but only for those who have been qualified by education to exercise their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. As regards the bulk of the people, it is recognized that education has got to come first, and what is urged is that this educational work should be pushed on in the most vigorous manner possible.

### *India Likely to be another Ireland*

It is true, as I have already admitted, that an Oriental country cannot hope to advance on Western lines, except by cautious and tentative steps. But what Japan has been able to achieve in forty years, India should certainly have accomplished in a century. The attitude of the two Governments in the matter has, however, been one of the main elements of difference in the two cases. My concern, however, is more with the present and the future than with the past. And here I repeat that, unless the old faith of the educated classes in the character and ideals of British rule is brought back, England will find on her hands before long another Ireland, only many times bigger, in India. The younger generations are growing up full of what may be called Irish bitterness, and the situation must fill all who believe in the peaceful progress of the country under British rule with anxious apprehensions. If India is to attain self-government within the Empire — an idea which to an increasing proportion of my countrymen appears to be a vain dream — the advance will have to be along several lines more or less simultaneously. Of these in some respects the most important is the admission of Indians to the higher branches of the public service. As long as India continues to be bureaucratically governed, admission to high office will be a test of the position assigned to the Indians in the system of administration. It is not a mere question of careers for young men, — though even that view is entitled to weight, and the bureaucracy certainly behaves at times as though the most important question before it was how to retain and, if possible, increase the existing number of openings for the employment of Englishmen in India — but it is a measure of our advance towards that

equality which has been promised us by the Sovereign and by Parliament. Moreover, as the ranks of the bureaucracy come to be recruited more and more from among the Indians, its resistance to the control of taxpayers' representatives will grow less and less. At present only the field of law — there, too, only a portion of it — is freely open to us, and we find Indians there climbing right to the top of the tree. And if my countrymen are thought to be qualified to discharge the duties of Chief Justice and Advocate-General, it is preposterous that they should be kept out of the superior ranks of Excise and Opium and Salt and Customs and Post and Telegraph and Survey, and similar other services.

### *Reforms Urgently Needed*

Under present arrangements India's true centre of gravity is in London. We protest against this most unnatural arrangement and we urge most strongly that all competitive examinations for recruitment to Indian services should be held, not in London only, but simultaneously in India and in England. And we claim to be admitted now to the executive councils of the Viceroy and the Governors of Madras and Bombay, as also to the Secretary of State's Council in this country. Next, we want district administration — which is the unit of administration in India — to be decentralized. On the one hand, it must be freed from the present excessive control of the secretariat of the central Government and its numerous special departments; and on the other, the people of the district must be provided with opportunities to influence its course more and more largely, till at last the officials become in fact, as they are in theory, the servants of the people. The first step towards this is to associate with the heads of districts, for purposes of general administration, boards of leading men elected by the people, at first, perhaps, merely advisory, but gradually entrusted with increasing powers of control. In this way an administration conducted with the real consent of the governed may, in course of time, be substituted for the present system of administration carried on in the dark and behind the backs of the people concerned, with its attendant evils of confidential reports and police surveillance. Then local self-government must be carried further. It still remains all over the country where it was placed by Lord Ripon<sup>1</sup> a quarter of a century ago, and in some places it has even been pushed back. Local bodies should now be made in the more advanced localities wholly popular assemblies and while the control of the Government over them must not be weakened, they should be freed from all petty and harassing interference on the part of officials. As regards Legislative Councils, the position is more difficult. Of course, the next instalment, whenever it comes, can, I think, be clearly foreseen. The enlargement of the Councils, the widening of their functions so that Budgets should be really discussed and passed, an increase in the proportion of elected members up to the point at

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.

which the officials will still have a small standing majority — these changes may sooner or later appear safe enough even to the official mind. But the advance beyond that is really the thing that will matter, and it is not easy to see how it will come about. As long as the higher branches of the public service continue to be a practical monopoly of Englishmen, there is small chance of the Legislative Councils being entrusted with any substantial share of control over the actions of the Executive, and this consideration emphasizes still further the necessity of steadily Indianizing the service of the country. In the army, too, our position must be generally improved, and the commissioned ranks now thrown open to carefully selected Indians. Side by side with these reforms, mass education must be taken vigorously in hand, so that in twenty years from now, if not earlier, there should be free and compulsory education in the country for both boys and girls.

I think that an earnest and sustained advance along these lines will go far to prevent any further alienation of the educated classes, and even their old goodwill may thus be regained. I cannot say that I have much hope that any such policy will be at once adopted. The struggle before us is, I fear, a long one and, in all probability, it will be a most bitter one. The flowing tide, however, is with us, and such a struggle can have but one issue. It only remains for me to say that it has been a pleasure to me to respond to the kind invitation of this Association. I do not expect that my views will receive any large assent at this meeting, and this only adds to my sense of the compliment which the Association has paid me.

## SITUATION IN EASTERN BENGAL

*At the annual dinner of the London Indian Society on Saturday, 5th May 1906, Gokhale delivered the following speech after Mr. Parmeshwar Lall had proposed the toast of the guests— Gokhale and Mr. P. Ramanathan of Ceylon :*

Gokhale began by expressing his satisfaction at finding himself there that evening in the company of their friend from Ceylon. Though Ceylon was a Crown Colony, and, as such, had now no connexion with India politically, India and Ceylon would continue to be inseparably associated in their thoughts as long as their great epic, *The Ramayana*, had its hold on the Indian mind. Speaking at a gathering of his countrymen, Gokhale could not help referring at some length to what was at that time happening in the newest province of their country. He left India on April 14, and on that very day events were taking place in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam which constituted a grave outrage on the liberties of the Indian people.

### *Criminal Folly*

"I hope," said Gokhale, "I am not given to using unduly strong language, but I feel bound to say—and I say it with a full sense of the responsibility of my words—that Sir B. Fuller's<sup>1</sup> Government has in six months done more to discredit the character of British rule in India than have all the denunciations of the worst critics of that rule, Indian and European, ever done during a hundred years; and I think that in breaking up a gathering like the Provincial Conference of Bengal, and in arresting and fining one of the foremost Indians of the day—Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee<sup>2</sup>—on a miserable pretext, that Government has been guilty of what I can only call incredible, criminal folly." Gokhale had devoted the best part of that day to reading the papers that had arrived that morning from India—papers from all parts of the country—papers both Indian and Anglo-Indian—and he had taken every care to get at the facts; and he had little doubt in his mind that their countrymen in Bengal had been subjected to an outrage unparalleled in the annals of British rule in India. And he would go further and say that unless the wrong that had been done was promptly set right, it would be difficult for his countrymen to maintain the same relations with the authorities that they had maintained so long.

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner of Settlements, C. P. (1885); Chief Commissioner, Assam (1902); Lt-Governor of Bengal and Assam (1905-06).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. (later Sir) SURENDRA NATH BANERJEE, I.C.S. (1848-1925); Collector, Sylhet (1871); but resigned owing to differences with his superiors; edited the daily *Bengalee*, Calcutta; President, Indian National Congress (1895); author of *A Nation in the Making*.

*Extraordinary Meanness*

The speaker then proceeded to give the meeting a brief account of what had occurred. The Provincial Conference of Bengal was instituted about twenty years ago, and, like the conferences of other provinces in India, it did for Bengal what the Indian National Congress did for the whole of India. Last year's Bengal Conference had been held at a place called Mymensing, and, following the usual practice in the matter, that Conference had fixed Barisal as the place of meeting for this year's Conference. It was on account of that resolution, and not because Bengal had been recently marked out by the new Lieutenant-Governor as a scene for his "resolute government," that the delegates to the Conference assembled last Easter at Barisal. Mr Rasul, a Mahomedan barrister, whose ardent patriotism had won for him the admiration of his countrymen, was selected to preside over the gathering. The troubles of the delegates from the Western Provinces began before they reached Barisal. Part of the journey from Calcutta to Barisal—that from Khulna to Barisal—has to be done in a steamer, and the authorities were guilty of the extraordinary meanness of throwing difficulties in the way of the delegates getting any food on the way. At a place called Jalabari a hospitable zamindar had pitched a tent near the point at which the steamer touched, and had kept refreshments ready, and the delegates wanted the steamer to stop only for fifteen minutes, so that they might land and partake of them. This was refused. The zamindar thereupon rushed on board with the refreshments, but before he could go back the boat lifted anchor and sailed, carrying the host from his place all the way to Barisal.

*Assault on Delegates*

At Barisal three to four thousand people had assembled to greet the delegates on their arrival, and, following the usual practice, they wanted to carry the President elect in a procession to the place fixed for his residence. But the authorities forbade the procession, prevented the delegates from landing till all the other passengers had landed, and then insisted on their going quietly to their respective residences! This was on April 13, and the Conference was to commence its sittings on the 14th. The delegates thereupon held a private consultation on the night of the 13th as to what they should do on the 14th, and after careful deliberation, they decided that they should first assemble the next day at a place called the Raja's Haveli, a short distance from where the Conference was to meet, and that they should then escort the President from there to the place of meeting, not taking even their walking-sticks with them, so as to give no excuse to the authorities for interfering, and walking only in rows of three and four, so as not to be charged with obstructing the road. And this they did the next day, but when about half the delegates had left the Raja's Haveli, and the other half were following, the police, under the direction of their superior officers who were present, charged those who

were in the Haveli, and began an indiscriminate assault on men who had not even their walking-sticks with them.

### *Arrest of Surendra Nath Banerjee*

It must be mentioned that up to this point the police had received absolutely no provocation for interfering—even the beautiful, patriotic song, “Bande Mataram,” against which the authorities in the Eastern Province have declared a fierce crusade, had not been sung by any one of the delegates! It was only after the police began this dastardly and disgraceful assault that the delegates commenced to chant the noble and inspiring words, by way of defiance and out of the bitterness of their souls! While his men were thus assaulting the delegates, the Superintendent of Police went up to Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee, who with the Hon. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Bose<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Motilal Ghose<sup>2</sup>, was walking ahead, and arrested him! Thereupon the others also asked to be arrested, but the Superintendent said that his orders were to arrest Mr. Banerjee alone! This was a most significant statement showing the feeling of the authorities against Mr. Banerjee personally. Mr. Banerjee was then marched off to the District Magistrate, who had issued the order for his arrest presumably before knowing what part Mr. Banerjee would take in what was to happen on that day. The day was a close holiday, owing to Easter, but the Magistrate was awaiting Mr. Banerjee's arrival, and, after insulting him and then fining him for contempt of court, because he protested against the insult, went through the farce of a hurried trial, and, without giving Mr. Banerjee the opportunity he demanded of cross-examining the Superintendent of Police or of obtaining legal assistance for his defence, inflicted another fine on him for taking part in a procession without a license! The whole affair was conducted with so indecent a disregard of the dignity of a court of justice that it would be a long time before it was forgotten.

On the other hand, the complaints lodged by Mr. Banerjee and other delegates against the police for assault were dismissed as frivolous! It was said that a member of the Bengal Legislative Council received a wound in the head at the hands of the police and several persons were badly injured. The papers also reported that, when the last mail left India, one boy who had been mercilessly beaten was lying in a critical condition in a hospital. This took place on the 14th. When the police stopped their assault the delegates met in conference and resolved that, as constitutional government had ceased to exist in Barisal, they should not go through the whole of their programme, but confine themselves merely to the questions of partition and the Swadeshi movement, and they sang the national song “Bande Mataram” (“Hail! Motherland”), with all the fervour which the occasion could not help evoking.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Editor, *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and the *Indian Spiritual Magazine*.

*Fuller's Dismissal Demanded*

The next day, on the Conference re assembling, the District Superintendent of Police went to the place and demanded from the leaders a guarantee that the national song would not be sung at the close of the proceedings, and that the delegates would not leave the place of meeting in a procession. The leaders very properly declined to give such a guarantee, whereupon the Superintendent dispersed the Conference by force. Thus, as far as Gokhale could gather from the papers, was what had taken place at Barisal, and he thought that they had a right to demand, and that it was the duty of the Government to grant, a searching and independent enquiry into the whole affair. If the enquiry showed that the facts were substantively as they had been reported in the papers, they would be entitled to ask, not only that the officials who were immediately responsible for the outrage should be properly punished, but also that Sir B. Fuller, who had done more than any man in recent years to bring British rule into evil repute with the people, should be removed from his present office, for it was impossible, after what had happened, for the people of Eastern Bengal and Assam to have anything to do with their present ruler.

*Beginning of Real Struggle*

Gokhale proceeded next to make a few general observations on what had happened, and said "Ladies, and gentlemen, though I resent as much as any man can what has taken place in Barisal, I am not sure that I am altogether sorry that events there have taken this turn. We have got to realize that the few liberties that we enjoy at present have really not been won by us, but that they have been the free and spontaneous gift of a succession of large-hearted and far-sighted statesmen, whose places, in some cases at any rate, have now been taken by unworthy successors. They have not come to us hallowed by suffering and sanctified by sacrifice — and until they have been re won by us on this basis, they must continue, as at present, dependent upon the sweet will of autocratic rulers. Another thing we have got to realize is that we are now only at the beginning of the real struggle, and as day succeeds day the character of this struggle will grow more and more, and not less, arduous."

*Faith in Mr Morley*

The speaker then turned to some of the observations of previous speakers. "Much disappointment," he said, "has been expressed today that the accession of Mr John Morley to the office of Secretary of State for India has so far made no change for us, and that, in some respects, the position has actually grown worse. I can understand this feeling, which I know was widely prevalent in India when I left, and which has found such vigorous utterance in this hall this evening. But, ladies and gentlemen, are we sure that we are quite fair to Mr Morley when we express such disappointment? He has been at the India Office for only five months, and most of the time his atten-



tion has been distracted, first by the General Election, and then by questions like Chinese labour and the Education Bill, to which, with the position he occupies in his party, he cannot be expected to be indifferent. Indian questions are altogether new to him, and even a man of his great gifts must take time to grasp properly problems affecting three hundred millions of people living at a distance of six thousand miles in a land which he has never visited. And till he has so grasped these problems how can anyone reasonably expect him to override the officials on the spot in India and their representatives — the members of the India Council in this country, on the strength of his sympathies alone? Ladies and gentlemen, like so many of my countrymen, I have been a profound admirer of Mr. Morley since my college days, and I feel towards him as towards a master. I have learnt much from his books, and his writings have helped to sustain me when much else on which I had relied seemed to give way. I have no doubt in my own mind that as soon as Mr. Morley has acquired a fair working knowledge of Indian problems — and he cannot take long to acquire it — his sympathies, which are evidently being held in check at present, will assert themselves, and the bureaucracy in India will be made to realize that the vast power which the Secretary of State for India wields may not always be exercised to back them up in their attempts to crush the growing aspirations of the Indian people. A man who all through his life has held the banner of freedom high, and who has made sacrifices for his convictions, may surely be trusted not to discredit wholly his own teachings when it comes to be his turn to put them into practice. Ladies and gentlemen, it is only just that Mr. Morley should have fair play and I think it is in the last degree unwise for us to be in such a hurry to pronounce an opinion on his administration. We must of course be firm, and we must be watchful, and I, for one, am expectant. But we shall only harm ourselves by being impatient.

### *Sacrifice for India — a Pure Joy*

Having described the ideal of Indian reformers as that of self-government on Colonial lines, Gokhale proceeded : " How soon or how late this ideal is realized depends really upon ourselves. Our numbers are so great that no power on earth can bar our way for any length of time, if only we are true to ourselves. But much work has to be done, and enormous sacrifices will have to be made before any real advance in this direction is secured. What we need today above everything else is a band of workers who will give up their all for the country and spread the gospel of unity and patriotism far and wide throughout the land. The curse of a tendency towards disintegration which still rests upon us must be lifted. Our love of the Motherland must grow so fervent and passionate that it will turn all sacrifice for India into a pure joy. And the workers must maintain resolute discipline in their ranks. What the situation requires is not new ideas, but sacrifice — not talk, but work — work early and work late — work when it is dawn and work when it is dark. We are entitled to do

such work for our country, and it is entirely in accord with the declared object of British rule in India. We are anxious to do this work without disturbing the harmonious relations that have hitherto existed between Indians and Englishmen, and if those who wield power at present in our country choose to turn their backs on solemn promises given in the name of England and thereby make a continuance of harmonious relations impossible, the responsibility for disturbing these relations will lie on them and not on us.

Ladies and gentlemen I do not wish to detain you longer. No one knows what the future has in store for us, or how much fulfilment our own eyes may witness before they close. But one thing is quite clear. There is nothing in this world of ours which may not be achieved by men whose lives are inspired by patriotism, sustained by faith, and ennobled by sacrifice. India expects that such men shall now come forward in sufficient numbers in her service. If this expectation is realized, all else will be well."

## RECALL OF SIR B. FULLER<sup>1</sup>

*On Saturday, the 19th May 1906, a meeting was held of the London Indian Society to protest against the repressive acts of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam and demand the recall of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor. Dadabhai Naoroji,<sup>2</sup> President of the Society, introduced Gokhale, who then moved the principal resolution in the following speech :*

### *Preliminary Observations*

Before dealing with the subject he pointed out that, although he had but recently come over from India, it was not quite correct, as their chairman had informed them, to say that he had come from the very atmosphere of the agitation and excitement. He left India on April 14, the day upon which the assault on the delegates took place at Barisal, and he knew nothing about this particular affair until he had reached Marseilles. So far as the general position in Bengal, however, was concerned, he might fairly claim to speak with special knowledge. (The Chairman : "That is what I meant.") Before leaving India he had been for four months continuously in Calcutta, the capital of Bengal. The Indians in London, in holding that meeting, were only following in the wake of their countrymen in all parts of India, where, according to a recent telegram in the *Daily News*, 142 public meetings of protest had already been held in the different provinces, and more were being held every day. At a time of such general excitement and indignation, he thought it was more than ever necessary for them to keep their heads cool and state whatever they had to state with a due sense of restraint. Care must be taken not to make any wholesale charges against the British Government in India on the strength of the discreditable proceedings in Eastern Bengal, which they had assembled that day to deplore and condemn, because it was only fair to remember that, though the indignation at those proceedings was universal throughout India, the proceedings themselves had been confined to only one out of seven provinces, and the other Provincial Governments had done nothing to be bracketed with the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Gokhale also thought it fair to mention that, in his opinion, the Viceroy of India could not be in sympathy with his Lieutenant in Eastern Bengal in the matter. True, they all would like to see Lord Minto<sup>3</sup> pulling up Sir B. Fuller—sharply and once for all. But even then, while he agreed with those who considered that it was the plain duty of the Viceroy to so pull up Sir B. Fuller, and that it was unfortunate and even lamentable weakness not to so pull him up, he could understand the delicacy of feeling which made a new Viceroy hesitate to interfere decisively and openly with the acts of the head of a Provincial Administration.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 82

<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 71.

*Fuller's Policy of Force*

With these preliminary observations, the speaker addressed himself to the resolution, which he had to offer for the adoption of the meeting. He said it was now seven months since that evil and ill fated measure — the Partition of Bengal — had been forced by Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> on the people of that province, in spite of their most vehement protests and in the face of a plain warning that such trampling of public opinion under foot was bound to cause trouble even in India. The feeling against partition was equally strong and equally bitter in both sections of the divided province. Indeed if anything it was stronger and more organized in the Western Province than in the Eastern as a majority of their Bengali brethren were in the Western Province, which further included Calcutta, the capital. And yet in spite of this how was it that while the Western Province continued to be administered on ordinary lines, the Eastern Province alone found it necessary to have recourse to such extraordinary measures of repression? The speaker thought that this was a very fair question to ask, and he was sure that anyone who attempted to frame an honest answer to it would at once see where the responsibility really lay. The fact was that the Western Province was presided over by Sir Andrew Fraser,<sup>2</sup> an administrator who, whatever criticism might be directed against some of his measures, had proved himself to be a patient and cool-headed officer, whereas in the Eastern Province Sir B. Fuller's conduct was characterized by an amount of excitability, want of tact, and wrong headedness, which showed him to be unfit for his great and highly responsible post. Sir B. Fuller's only idea of dealing with popular discontent was by methods of force — and since he had been appointed Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal he had pursued that policy in so aggressive and determined a manner that there was no hope of peace in this province until he was relieved of his duties.

*School Boys Sentenced for Singing National Song*

Gokhale then proceeded to state briefly what it was that their countrymen in Bengal charged Sir B. Fuller with. The particular outrage at Barisal complained of in the resolution was only the last of a series of grossly repressive acts. For the past six months he had taken measure after measure against the popular liberties, and had governed the province in a manner which had sorely tried the patience of the people. He had been guilty of grave and offensive discourtesy to popular leaders — men of high position in the Indian world. He had declared a fierce crusade against the schoolboys of his province, and parents and guardians would find it difficult ever to forgive him for that. In all backward countries, especially in countries governed by bureaucracies the young men of the country were the standard bearers of a new hope, they bore the torch of a new light — the light of freedom and popular aspirations. And the boys of Eastern Bengal were like boys in other parts of India. Sir B.

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p 16<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p 109

Fuller, therefore, took it into his head that if what he called the disaffection of the people was to be put down, he must first of all put down the boys of his province ! As a consequence, several hundred boys had been expelled from the schools on account of their singing the national song or being present at Swadeshi meetings. But that was not all. Had it been simply a case of expelling the boys from the schools that would have been serious enough, yet not quite so serious, because if the people had any real grit in them they would start their own schools, independent of the Government, for the education of these boys; but the Lieutenant-Governor, not satisfied with mere expulsion, had, in several cases, directed criminal proceedings against the lads. The result was that during the last five months scenes had been witnessed in India such as had never been witnessed anywhere else—schoolboys of a tender age sentenced to rigorous imprisonment or heavily fined,—in one case actually two little children of nine and ten had been placed in the dock to undergo regular trial,—for being members of an unlawful assembly. It was true that the Magistrate, in the end, let off those children but what must have been the anxiety and suffering of the parents during the time the trial lasted ! The whole thing was too ludicrous for laughter and too sad for tears.

### *Other Acts of Repression*

Another of Sir B. Fuller's measures of repression was the quartering of military and punitive police on the people of Barisal and other places. And it was only under pressure from the Viceroy that, after a time, the police were withdrawn. Then Sir B. Fuller had tried to intimidate the independent Press of his province, and, in that connexion, Gokhale narrated how a paper in Assam, called the *Weekly Chronicle*, had been treated. The Lieutenant-Governor's next attack on popular liberties took the shape of dispersing public meetings and prohibiting them in public places. And emboldened by his success, he next sought to prohibit meetings even on private grounds. Then came the prohibition on street processions and the singing of the beautiful national song, "Bande Mataram." One point Gokhale desired to emphasize in connection with all these measures of repression. It was not pretended, even by the authorities, that a public meeting in any place or a public procession or the singing of the noble national song had, even in a single instance, been followed by a breach of the peace by those who took part in them. The only breaches of the peace so far committed in Eastern Bengal had been by the alleged guardians of public peace—the police. On the top of all this came the astounding, the incredible folly of the officials at Barisal.

### *Call for Independent Inquiry and Prompt Punishment*

Having briefly glanced at the facts of the occurrence, as gathered from both the popular and the official versions, Gokhale proceeded to develop his contention that there were four separate matters in that affair which called for

prompt enquiry and redress First, there was the cowardly, brutal, and entirely unprovoked assault by the police on the delegates to the Conference on April 14 The second was the treatment of their great countryman, Mr Surendra Nath Banerjee Gokhale could safely predict that Mr Emerson, the District Magistrate of Barisal, had achieved for himself an unenviable notoriety, and that his name would be a by-word of official insolence and unscrupulousness for a long time to come in India Then there was the conduct of the Deputy Magistrate in regard to the complaints of the delegates about police assault, and the dismissal of these complaints as frivolous by the District Magistrate without any enquiry And last, and gravest of all, there was the dispersal by force of a constitutional and long established gathering like the Bengal Provincial Conference They demanded a searching and independent enquiry into these four matters If the main facts of the occurrence were not in dispute, there still remained the question of responsibility, and the speaker was clearly and emphatically of opinion that there must be a thorough and independent enquiry into the whole affair It might be said that the High Court would give whatever redress was needed But, surely, when such a gross outrage on popular liberties and such wanton brutality had been committed by the Executive, the Government was not going to content itself with having the question considered on the narrow and technical grounds of law only, it was, in the speaker's opinion, more a question of Government policy than of law, and they must respectfully insist on executive action to set right an executive wrong Moreover moving the High Court for redress was a very expensive thing, and it was not everyone who had been wronged that could resort to it There must, therefore, be a special enquiry directed by the Government of India into the whole affair, if the confidence of the people in the character of British rule, already rudely shaken, was not to be destroyed altogether And the officials who would be found to be responsible for the outrage must be promptly and adequately punished

Gokhale recognized with gratitude that Mr Morley and Lord Minto had already moved in the matter in the right direction The withdrawal of the circulars against processions and the singing of the national song and the restoration of expelled boys to schools was an important first step towards conciliating the people, but it was only the first of several steps that were necessary and he earnestly trusted that the good work so well begun would be carried steadily forward to completion They saw, for instance, from a telegram in that morning's *Daily News*, that the prohibition of public meetings in public places still remained, and that must be withdrawn Above all, it was impossible to have peace in the Eastern Province as long as Sir B Fuller was permitted to remain at its head The Government might send him anywhere else they pleased, but Bengal was clearly not the province for him In conclusion, Gokhale appealed to the audience to maintain the agitation in an earnest and persistent spirit, as questions of grave constitutional importance were involved in the matter

## THE INDIAN PROBLEM

*Gokhale delivered an address upon "The Indian Problem" at the New Reform Club on November, 30, 1908. The chair was taken by the Right Hon. J. E. Ellis, M. P., late Under Secretary for India.*

Gokhale, who was received with cheers, said: I feel sincerely grateful to the members of the New Reform Club for their kindness in asking me to address them on India this evening. I came to this country more than six months ago, deputed by the Presidency Association<sup>1</sup> of Bombay, to lay before the authorities here the views of the Association on the subject of the forthcoming reforms. I am now about to return to India, and before leaving I am sincerely glad to have this opportunity to address a last word to friends of Indian reform in this country.

### *How Matters Stand ?*

The situation in India at the present moment is undoubtedly serious and even anxious but I think it is necessary that considerable caution should be exercised in accepting or interpreting the somewhat alarmist telegrams that have of late been coming from that country. India is a large country, and news collected over so vast an area and poured into another country, thousands of miles away, in a single stream is apt at times to prove misleading in its effect on the public mind. Then a section of the Anglo-Indian community, especially in Upper India, has undoubtedly grown apprehensive about the scope and character of the proposed reforms, and it is not difficult to discover traces of this nervousness in the telegrams which appear here from day to day. Lastly, the advocates of disorder and their instruments are, I fear, not overpleased at the prospect of important reforms, and this may account to some extent for what appears to be a spurt of renewed activity on their part. But when all these things are said, and all allowances made for them, the fact remains — and I hope all who are in a position to influence the course of events in India will adequately realize this — that the Indian situation today is most serious, that we are at a grave crisis in the affairs of that country, and that the next two or three years will really determine what is to be the future of India's connexion with England. It is not merely that a few wild spirits have broken from all restraint and are deliberately stirring up disorder in the land but the whole attitude of mind of those who have received, or are receiving, western education — and with them is the best of their countrymen — towards British rule is undergoing a rapid and fundamental change.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 27.

*History of the New Spirit*

What will be the outcome of this change, and in what spirit it may be met by the Government are problems so grave that they will for some time claim the undivided attention of all who are engaged in the work of either administration or of agitation in India and in this country. To understand properly the nature and extent of this change, this unrest, or by whatever name you may call it, you must go back exactly seventy-five years in the history of British India, to the year 1833. It was in that year that the old East India Company was deprived of its trading character, and it became a body of rulers, pure and simple. It was in that year that the great Charter Act was passed by Parliament laying down that in the administration of India there were to be no distinctions of race or creed, and that all positions in the government were to be freely and equally open to all. Lord William Bentinck<sup>1</sup> was then Governor-General of India, and the late Sir William Hunter<sup>2</sup> has justly said of him that he was the first Governor-General to make the interests of the Indian people the principal test of his measures. Those were the days of the first Reform Bill, of the emancipation of slaves, and the statesmen at the helm of affairs in this country laid down towards India a policy worthy of England's best traditions. They perceived the finger of Providence in the miraculous succession of events which enabled a small number of their countrymen to establish their sway over a vast people with a great and ancient civilization. Their imagination was touched, and they solemnly declared that they would rule India in the spirit of trust and on a basis of equality for the two races.

For twenty-five years very little was actually done to give effect to this promise of equality. The energies of the Government were directed during the time principally to expansion and consolidation, and to creating in the country an administrative machinery adapted to the higher standards of the West. There was then no educated class in India to appreciate the promise, and no pressure of public opinion to urge its fulfilment. After twenty-five years, however, before the dark shadow of the Mutiny had quite withdrawn itself from the land, a momentous step was taken to render such fulfilment possible—the establishment of Indian universities. A Royal Proclamation was at the same time addressed to the people of India repeating the pledge of equality given by the Charter Act of 1833. Twenty-five years again passed, during which period a considerable class trained in the universities, and imbued with a love of free institutions, came into existence, and then a second great step forward was taken—the grant of rural and urban local self-government.

<sup>1</sup> LORD WILLIAM CAVENDISH BENTINCK (1774-1839) Governor of Madras (1803-07) Governor General of Bengal (1828-33) first Governor General of India (1833-35), abolished Sati, was an advocate of the admission of Indians to higher grades in the public service and emancipation of the Press for the purpose of creating and strengthening a healthy public opinion.

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 346.



*Reaction and its Result*

By a curious coincidence it is again twenty-five years now since the Local Self-Government Acts of Lord Ripon<sup>1</sup> were passed, and I earnestly trust that the reforms that will shortly be announced will constitute a third great step forward, and will grant us what would be regarded as real beginnings of provincial self-government. This period of twenty-five years has for the most part been a period of sore trial to the people of India. It has been with us, as it was till recently with you, a period of great reaction. Your reaction began with the overthrow of Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill, and it culminated in the Boer War. Our reaction began about the same time, and it culminated in Lord Curzon's<sup>2</sup> administration. Side by side with this reaction, a great national movement has been working in India to raise the people to a higher level of political existence, and in its earlier years at any rate this movement was the outcome of our faith in the principles of the Liberal Party in this country, and in the high purpose of British rule in India. Our university men, who had studied in the universities in the sixties and the early seventies, as also those who had been educated before them, had seen the old Liberal Party at its best, and these men were the leaders of the Congress movement when it was first started. The country had seen great Liberals like Mr. Bright and Mr. Fawcett,<sup>3</sup> and later Mr. Bradlaugh,<sup>4</sup> champion the cause of India from a pure sense of justice and from a righteous indignation against wrong. Finally, there was the enthusiasm and gratitude aroused by Lord Ripon's administration.<sup>5</sup> It was no wonder therefore that the Indian National Congress began its work with great faith in the Liberal Party. Gradually, however, this faith began to decline, and at last, in the case of the vast majority of Congressmen, it was for the time killed by Sir Henry Fowler,<sup>6</sup> as a Liberal Secretary of State, and by Lord Elgin<sup>6</sup> as a Liberal Viceroy. With the loss of this faith came a weakening of the belief in the high purpose of British rule, and this belief, too was practically destroyed during the last three years of Lord Curzon's administration. Lord Curzon, as you all know, is a man of great, of wonderful gifts, and he worked incessantly to improve the efficiency of administration in India. But he had no sympathy with the aspirations of the educated classes, and during the last three years of his rule his constant endeavour was to put down the growing influence of these classes, and as far as in him lay, perpetuate the subjection of the people of India. With this object he forced on the country a series of reactionary measures affecting the universities, the Press, and the public service; he attempted what was practically a repudiation of the Queen's

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 16.<sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 293.<sup>4</sup> See foot-note on p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> SIR HENRY HARTLEY FOWLER (first VISCOUNT WOLVERHAMPTON) (1830-1911); member, House of Commons (1880-1903); Under-secretary for Home Affairs (1884); President, Local Government Board (1892); Secretary for India (1894-95); Chairman, Indian Currency Committee (1898-99).

<sup>6</sup> See foot-note on p. 33.

Proclamation, he made an astoundingly unwise Convocation speech in Calcutta, attacking the people of India and their ancestors and the ideals of their race—a speech which no Indian is likely ever to forget or forgive, and on the top of everything came the crowning blunder of the Partition of Bengal. For three years the country was kept in a state of constant irritation and exasperation till all spirit of endurance gave way. Men began to brood gloomily over their utter helplessness, new ideas began to ferment in their minds, and while some proceeded to organize a boycott and a policy of passive resistance against the Government, a few went further, and drifted daily more and more towards paths of physical violence.

### *Other Influences at Work*

This was the position at the close of 1905 when Lord Curzon left India, and was succeeded by Lord Minto.<sup>1</sup> Lord Minto is a kindly, sympathetic, high-minded ruler, but he has inherited a task of extraordinary difficulty. And partly owing to the pressure of officials on the spot, and partly driven by circumstances, he has had recourse during the last three years to a series of repressive measures, and by a strange irony of fate, Lord Morley,<sup>2</sup> who was looked up to as a master by successive generations of Indian University men, has had, as Secretary of State for India, to stand up for these measures and justify them in Parliament! All this has naturally deepened still further the gloom prevailing in India. Other influences, too, have been at work during the last few years to modify, and in some respects modify profoundly, our traditional attitude towards British rule. For some time past Asia has been affected by a new movement—a movement towards nationalities and for constitutions. It is the same movement as that which affected the greater part of Europe about the middle of the nineteenth century. We, in the East, have been about fifty years behind Europe in the matter, that is all. One has only to look at what is taking place in Turkey, in Egypt, in Persia, in China—not to speak of Japan—to understand the new thought that has been working in India. Then the victories of Japan over Russia have lent a new dignity to the East. Lastly, the treatment to which we have been subjected in England's colonies has brought home most emphatically to our minds what a mockery was all the talk that is sometimes indulged in of our being citizens of this Empire. And we have begun to feel and realize keenly that unless our status in our own country is improved, we are not likely to receive better treatment elsewhere. Lord Curzon's attempt to put down the influence of the educated classes would have caused trouble at any time during the last quarter of a century, but it became in a special degree dangerous because of its being made when these other influences were in operation.

### *Parties and Policies*

And now what is the position today? That after all, is the really important

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 71

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 23

question. And in dealing with it, let me say at once that we have to keep in view principally what are known as the educated classes of the country. It is true that these classes were numerically a small minority in the country, though they were not quite so small in numbers as was sometimes imagined. But they were the brain of the country, and what they thought today the rest of India thought tomorrow. They formed the public opinion for the land. There are about a million people in India today who have received some sort of English education; and from fifteen to twenty millions have received an education in the vernaculars. But the number of those who take an interest in public questions is larger than this. All who come directly or indirectly under the influence of the Vernacular Press take such interest, and it is not an extravagant estimate to put this number at from forty to fifty millions—equal practically to the whole population of these islands.

Taking the educated class, you may first divide it into those who want reforms and those who want separation from England or independence. And it is quite safe to say that those who want reforms are still the vast majority—quite nine-tenths of the number. But the bulk of these men, though they want reforms, have now practically lost all hope of getting any substantial reforms. The older leaders and workers have not yet abandoned that hope, and they moreover realize that it is necessary for the people to work in co-operation with the British Government for many years yet before they develop in themselves the strength that is required to sustain the fabric of self-government. But these leaders and workers are now rapidly losing their old influence in the country which is passing over to those younger men who advocate obstruction and resistance to the Government to extort concessions. Of the tenth, who want independence—and this section has come into existence only during the last three years—a large majority would like to work quietly—without coming into direct collision with Government—for some time. But a small, though rapidly growing, minority has formed into a physical force party, whose programme is to deliberately stir up disorder and have recourse to every practicable form of violence, because it regards any disorder or misery, or even anarchy itself, as preferable to the presence of the foreigner in the land.

### *Higher Purpose of British Rule*

If the reforms which are to be shortly announced turn out to be really substantial, the effective conciliation of the nine-tenths who want reforms is not impossible. And if such conciliation is achieved, the air will be cleared of that anti-English feeling with which it is so heavily charged today, and which is really the gravest danger of the present situation. There will then be very little sympathy in the country with the advocates of disorder or their instruments, and the task of dealing with disorder will be comparatively simple. I have already mentioned that the Congress, especially in its earlier years, had great faith in what it regarded as the higher purpose of British rule. What is this higher purpose? As it has been understood, it was first to introduce into

India the higher standards of administration of the West, and particularly of England, and secondly, to assist the people in making a steady advance towards self government in accordance with such standards till they came to govern themselves on those lines. And in our opinion, British rule will have failed of that purpose if it merely introduces Western standards of government into the country and then continues or attempts to continue to govern the people autocratically or bureaucratically. It will also have failed if the standards that have been introduced are allowed to disappear, and we revert again to our old forms and methods of government.

Now, the work of introducing Western standards of administration into the country has been already well nigh accomplished. But as regards the other object, in many respects even more important than the first, with the exception of the beginnings of rural and urban self government granted by Lord Ripon, very little progress has been noticeable. It cannot be said that the demand for self government had not been foreseen when it was decided to introduce English education into India. Macaulay's<sup>1</sup> glowing anticipation of such a demand, when the Charter Act of 1833, was under discussion, is well known. Other statesmen have also from time to time uttered similar sentiments, and till recently no one in India doubted that this was to be the course of British rule. Then your literature and your history, which we have been studying for fifty years and more, are all permeated with ideas of the value and dignity of freedom, of constitutional liberty. Not only that, but throughout there is an undercurrent of disdain for those who allow themselves to be governed by others. And how could anyone expect that the people of India, after being fed on your literature and your history for half a century, would remain quiet after Lord Curzon had practically proclaimed a doom of perpetual subjection for them?

### *Radical Re arrangement Necessary*

Extension of self government in India is thus necessary, as well to fulfil the higher purpose of British rule, of which I have spoken, as for our self-respect. It is also necessary in the highest interests of our country. The present form of administration in India, however suited to a state of transition, when the ideas and methods and appliances of government of one country had to be successfully introduced into another, is altogether ill adapted to the promotion of the larger and more permanent interests of the governed. As long as the main energies of the Government had to be devoted to evolving law and order in the land and covering the country with railways, telegraphs, and other public works, the disadvantages and inconveniences of the present arrangements were not quite so obvious. But that stage is now passed, and a radical revision of the arrangements has now become necessary.

The administration at present is carried on by a fleeting body of foreign

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 342

officials, who stay in the country just long enough to complete their period of service and then retire with a pension. There is no one among them who is permanently interested in the country, as only the children of the country can be interested. When they retire, they carry with them out of the country all that knowledge and experience and training which they have acquired at our expense, and which can no longer be available to us. New officials take their place to acquire in their turn similar knowledge and experience and training, and then similarly to carry it out of the country. The Administration thus is largely in the hands of men who are either leaving or are preparing to leave the country, and large questions concerning the permanent well-being of the people, such as mass education, relief of agricultural indebtedness, and so on; which require continuous examination and discussion and persevering effort made from year to year, naturally cannot receive much attention at their hands. The present efficiency can at best be only a mechanical kind of efficiency—the result of the capacity, the sense of discipline and the sense of duty of the instruments. It can never attain the level of that higher efficiency which can spring only from self-government.

### *Need for Substantial Reforms*

I have already said that if the reforms to be shortly announced prove to be substantial, the conciliation of the bulk of the educated classes in India is not impossible. In less than a fortnight from today we shall know what they are, and we shall then be in a position to say how far they will really conciliate the people. It will be unfortunate, nay, disastrous, if they fail to satisfy reasonable men. I earnestly trust they will constitute a third great step forward in the history of British rule in India. I trust that they will complete the fabric of rural and urban self-government. This means a reconstitution of Provincial Legislative Councils, with elected majorities, and with a reasonable control over administration and finance, to be exercised subject to the veto of the heads of the Government. Then Indians ought now to be appointed to the Executive Councils and the pledge given in the new Proclamation about obliterating race distinctions in appointments to the public service generally must be fulfilled better than a similar pledge in the Proclamation of 1858. Lastly, district administration must be decentralized and popular representatives associated with the heads of districts in the work of administration.

I think if these reforms are granted, they will give us a real interest in Provincial, district, and local administration. And if they are accompanied by conciliatory action in two important matters—the Partition of Bengal and the amnesty to political prisoners—there is every probability of the present crisis being successfully overcome. I am absolutely convinced that unless the Partition of Bengal is in some way modified, there will be no peace in Bengal, and as a result, no peace in India. And much of the effect of the coming reforms, even if they are substantial, will be lost, unless the bitter exasperation that has been caused in the public mind by recent prosecu-

tions for sedition is removed by an amnesty to those who have been punished for their opinions. This in my humble opinion is the only true path of conciliation and if Lord Morley and Lord Minto will take it, and take it without delay, I think it will prove effective and their names will go down to a grateful posterity with those of Lord Canning and Lord Ripon. But if they miss this opportunity, if the reforms turn out to be less substantial than they should be, or if they are not accompanied by either of the two conciliatory measures I have mentioned — I really fear we shall not be far from martial law in parts of India. And if martial law is once proclaimed it will at once mean an end all over the country of the moral influence which still lies behind British rule and the mind then reels to think of the consequences which will ensue.

## CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN INDIA

*The following article contributed by Gokhale appeared in the "Contemporary Review" for March 1909 :*

### *Situation Full of Peril and Anxiety*

The statement made by Lord Morley<sup>1</sup> in the House of Lords in December last on Indian reforms and the publication of the despatches that have passed between the Government of India and the Secretary of State on the subject have gone far to clear the air throughout India. It has become possible now not only to survey the existing situation but in some respects even to regard the immediate future with mind freed largely from that anxiety which has haunted us during the last four or five years. The position that had been reached before the announcement of the reforms was indeed one of extreme gravity. A long period of reaction had culminated in a Viceroyalty, which, however brilliant in some of its aspects, had left great bitterness behind and a task of unexampled difficulty to the successor. In more than one matter it had cut athwart the higher interests of the country, as understood by its educated classes, and by repeatedly trampling on their feelings and susceptibilities and their cherished aspirations, it had driven those classes to brood gloomily over their utter helplessness. As a result, a great movement for constitutional reform, which had been in existence in the country for twenty-two years, was for the time engulfed by the growing tide of popular resentment and despair. The old faith in the purpose and character of British rule, on which the movement was largely based, had well-nigh vanished, and those few who still clung to that faith stood more or less discredited with their countrymen. Passive resistance to authority, so as to paralyze what had come to be regarded as an unsympathetic and unprogressive administration, was being widely and openly preached. A few of the wilder spirits in the country had gone even further. Breaking loose from all restraint, they were planning desperate deeds of violence to mark their hatred of the administration, and such deeds were exercising a fatal fascination over thoughtless and immature minds. The Government was answering violent attacks in the press and on the platform by prosecutions for sedition of writers and speakers on an unprecedented scale, by deportations without trial and by enactments after enactments of a most drastic character, directed against freedom of speech and writing. And these in their turn were strengthening the hold of the physical violence party, especially on young minds, and were directly leading to increased underground activity on their part. The air throughout the country was heavily laden with a strong anti-English feeling, and on the English side, too, there was a growing

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 23.

feeling of wrath which was likely to terminate in an open cry for violent reprisals. Never since the Mutiny was the situation so full of peril and anxiety.

### *A New Dawn*

Happily the long night seems to be over, and we already see the faint streaks of a new dawn. In some respects the crisis had been precipitated by the presence of Lord Morley at the India Office. The feeling with which, as an honoured teacher of Liberalism, he was regarded by successive generations of University men in India was one of deep reverence, and their hearts were stirred strangely with a new hope when his appointment as Secretary of State for India was announced. By a curious irony of fate, however, the three years that have since elapsed have, for the most part, been years of violent repression in Indian administration. This was no doubt due to causes which had been in operation before, but in the public mind Lord Morley came to be closely associated with this repression, and this produced a most painful impression generally, and confirmed, largely, the prevailing distrust of Englishmen in the country. It is a noteworthy circumstance that during the last two years, while there has been a vehement feeling of disappointment and indignation against Lord Morley, the warm personal regard entertained for Lord Minto<sup>1</sup> from the time of his arrival has not been in the least affected by his repressive measures. The vindication of Lord Morley's Liberalism was thus a necessary element in any real improvement of the situation, and those who continued to believe in him in spite of all appearances rejoiced to think that such vindication has now been supplied by the reforms that have been announced.

### *Reforms, a Notable Advance*

To understand what these reforms really mean for the people of India, it is necessary to take them with the appointment of two Indian members made by Lord Morley last year to his own Council and with the changes in the administration that are expected to follow as a result of the labours of the Decentralization Commission.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the Report of the Commission is not yet out. Partly on this account, and partly because the effect of the new reforms in practice must largely depend on the manner in which the details are worked out and—they have yet to be worked out—any opinion expressed today on the scheme must be regarded as more or less tentative. Even with this uncertainty, however, I have no doubt in my own mind that the reforms announced constitute a notable advance, that they go a long way to bring the administration of the country into harmony with its present requirements, and that when they come into full operation they will mark for the people the commencement of a new era of peaceful progress under British rule.

Briefly stated, these reforms are as follows

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 90.



An Indian member is to be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council. At least one Indian member is to be appointed to the Executive Councils at Madras and Bombay. Executive Councils are to be established in other provinces where they do not at present exist, and it is expected that Indian members will be placed on them. The number of members in the Viceroy's Legislative Council is to be more than doubled; and though the official majority there is to be retained, there is to be a large increase in the elected element. In the Provincial Legislative Councils the number of members is to be doubled, but the present official majority in them is to be abolished. The functions of all Legislative Councils are to be expanded. Members are to be empowered to bring up administrative questions for discussion before them and to embody their views in the form of resolutions. They are also to be empowered to divide the Councils when the financial statement is under consideration, and to embody their suggestions in the shape of recommendations. The non-official members being in a majority in Provincial Councils, will have a preventive control over Provincial legislation. The fabric of rural and urban self-government is to be completed, and it is to be built up from the village at the bottom. It is to be freed from official trammels, Government exercising control from without instead of dictating or interfering from within.

So much has been definitely promised. In addition to this any devolution of authority from the Supreme to Provincial Governments, and from the latter to district authorities, such as is expected when final orders are passed on the Decentralization Commission's Report, is bound to lead to increased opportunities to representatives of the people to influence the course of the administration.

### *Faint Light at the Top*

These proposals must, no doubt, appear most modest to those who are enjoying a full measure of self-government. But to the people of India, as they are situated today, they mean a really great step forward. With Indian members in the Secretary of State's Council, the Viceroy's Executive Council and Provincial Executive Councils, we shall have reasonable access to those seats of authority where policies are determined and all important matters connected with the administration disposed of. Moreover, the appointment of Indians to these Councils means the admission of the people of India to a participation in the highest responsibilities of Government, and it carries with it an access of dignity to their status under British rule. The proposed reform of Legislative Councils is a far-reaching measure, and will for the first time bring the administration under some sort of popular control. At present the administration is carried on entirely in the dark, behind the backs of the people. It will now have to be in the light of day and under the scrutiny of public discussion. Local self-government, too, will become a reality, and will afford, as it was intended to do by Lord Ripon,<sup>1</sup> valuable training ground for the people

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 32.

to manage their own affairs. If the whole government of the country is compared to a building with rural and urban boards as its base, district and provincial administrations as its centre, and executive councils and the Secretary of State's Council as the top, it may be said that while at present there is only partial light from the base, with darkness round the centre, and thick darkness at the top, under the proposed scheme there will be full light round the base, partial light on the centre, and faint light at the top.

The scheme thus taken as a whole is a substantial instalment of reform, and as such it has given deep and sincere satisfaction throughout India. There are no doubt differences of opinion as regards details, but Lord Morley himself has recognized that in a matter of this magnitude and importance there must naturally be room for a variety of opinions on minor points. The effect that the publication of the scheme has already produced on the situation is, to my mind, the best tribute to its statesmanship. The task of pacifying the country—and such pacification is necessary as much in the interests of India as of England—has been rendered sensibly easier since the announcement of the reforms. Of course, much yet depends upon how effect is given to the scheme, and even when it is fully carried out it will have to be supplemented by other measures before the task of pacification is completed. But the time to speak of those measures will be when these reforms are out of the way.

### *Going Back will be Disastrous*

One word of warning here may be uttered. It will be absolutely disastrous if any attempt is made to go back on the scheme in any important particular. The people of this country have accepted it in the spirit in which it has been conceived by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, and if they are now subjected to any disappointment in connection with it there will be a violent reaction, which will be in every way deplorable. One most gratifying feature of the situation is the manner in which the bulk of the Anglo Indian community in India has recognised the importance and necessity of reform. Lord Morley and Lord Minto have both really deserved well of India.

## EAST AND WEST IN INDIA

*The following is the full text of a Paper read by Gokhale at the Universal Races Congress, London, in July 1911 :*

The object of the Universal Races Congress has been described by the organizers to be "to discuss, in the light of modern knowledge and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the East, between so-called white and so-called coloured peoples with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings and a heartier co-operation." With the commencement of the twentieth century, the relations between the East and the West may be regarded as having entered on a new phase, and it is, I think, in accord with the changed spirit of the times that the West should think of summoning a Congress, where the representatives of all races, "with developed types of civilisation might meet each other face to face and might, in friendly rivalry, further the causes of mutual trust and respect between Occident and Orient." To the people of the East such a desire on the part of the people of the West is naturally a matter of profound interest and of far-reaching significance.

### *East and West must Meet on Equal Terms*

The traditional view, so well expressed by the poet, of the changeless and unresisting East, beholding with awe the legions of the West, as they thundered past her, bowing low before the storm, while the storm lasted, and plunging back again in thought, when the storm was over, seemed for centuries to encourage—almost invite—unchecked aggression by Western nations in Eastern lands, in utter disregard of the rights or feelings of Eastern peoples. Such aggression, however, could not go on for ever, and the protest of the Eastern world against it, as evidenced by the steady growth of a feeling of national self-respect in different Eastern lands has now gathered sufficient strength and volume to render its continuance on old lines extremely improbable, if not altogether impossible. The victories of Japan over Russia, the entry of Turkey among constitutionally-governed countries, the awakening of China, the spread of the national movement in India, Persia and Egypt, all point to the necessity of the West revising her conception of the East—revising also the standards by which she has sought in the past to regulate her relations with the East. East and West may now meet on more equal terms than was hitherto possible, and as a first step towards such meeting the value of the Universal Races Congress cannot be overestimated.

The problem—how to ensure "a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings and a heartier co-operation" between the East and the West—so difficult, everywhere, is nowhere else so difficult and so delicate as it is in India.

In the case of other countries, the contact of the West with the East is largely external only, in India the West has, so to say, entered into the very bone and marrow of the East. For a hundred years now, more or less, India has been under the political sway of England, and the industrial domination of the country has been no less complete than the political. This peculiar relationship introduces into the problem factors of great complexity, and the conflict of interests, which it involves has to be harmonized before attempts made with the object which the Congress has in view, can possess an enduring value or produce solid results.

It is recognized on all sides that the relations between Europeans and Indians in India have grown greatly strained during the last quarter of a century. And yet Englishmen started with uncommon advantages in India. Owing to India's peculiar development, the establishment of British rule, so far from being resented, was actually regarded with feelings of satisfaction, if not enthusiasm, by the people over the greater part of the country. It is true that England never conquered India in the sense in which the word "conquer" is ordinarily used. She did not come to the country as an invader, nor did she fight her battles, when she had to fight them, with armies composed of her own people. The establishment and the consolidation of her rule which undoubtedly is one of the most wonderful phenomena of modern times, was entirely the result of her superior power of organization, her superior patriotism and her superior capacity for government, applied to the conditions that prevailed in India during the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. And, strange as it may seem to many, the new rule was accepted by the mass of the people as bringing them welcome relief from a more or less chronic state of disorder, and conferring on them advantages, outweighing all considerations on the other side. This was due to the fact that with all her contribution to human progress in many fields, religion, philosophy, literature, science, art — a contribution which the world is coming to recognize more and more every day, and of which Indians may well remain proud for all time — India did not develop the national idea or the idea of political freedom as developed in the West. Who exercised the sovereign authority was to her people a minor matter, as long as it was well exercised and did not seriously interfere with their religious, social or communal life. And it cannot be denied that in many essential respects the standards of government of the new rulers compared favourably with those of the indigenous powers that were then struggling for supremacy in the land.

The advantageous start thus secured was further improved by the declarations of wise and far seeing statesmen made from time to time in those early days, as regards the policy in accordance with which the affairs of this country were to be administered. India they declared, was to them a trust. Not England's profit but India's moral and material well being was to be the object of the rule, Englishmen were not to form a governing caste in the country, the people of India were to be helped to advance steadily to a position of equa-

lity with them so that they might in due course acquire the capacity to govern themselves in accordance with the higher standards of the West. To fit the youth of the country for their new responsibilities, institutions were started for imparting to them Western education, and the class thus trained in the ideas of the West was expected to act as interpreter between the Government and the people, bringing its active goodwill to the support of the former. The establishment of Universities and Queen Victoria's noble Proclamation, addressed to the princes and people of India, on the morrow of the mutiny, set the final seal on this large-hearted policy.

### *Estrangement between Englishmen and Indians*

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind to understand clearly the estrangement that has taken place, as observed above, during the last quarter of a century, between Englishmen and Indians, especially that class among the Indians which has come, directly or indirectly, under the influence of the education of the West. Numerically this class still constitutes but a small proportion of the whole population, but it is undoubtedly the brain of the country doing its thinking for it, and determining its public opinion. For several years this class was keenly appreciative of England's work in India and its attitude towards Englishmen, on the whole, was that of pupils to their teachers — an attitude of respect, of confidence, even of affection. The first effect of Western teaching on those who received it was to incline them strongly in favour of the Western way of looking at things, and under this influence they bent their energies, in the first instance, to a re-examination of the whole of their ancient civilization — their social usages and institutions, their religious beliefs, their science, their art, in fact, their entire conception and realization of life. This brought them into violent collision with their own society, but that very collision drove them closer to the Englishmen in the country, to whom they felt deeply grateful for introducing into India the liberal thought of the West with its protest against caste or sex disabilities and its recognition of man's dignity as man — a teaching which they regarded as of the highest value in serving both as a corrective and a stimulant to their old civilization. On one point they entertained no doubt whatever in their minds. They firmly believed that it was England's settled policy to raise steadily their political status till at last they fully participated in the possession of those free institutions, which it is the glory of the English race to have evolved.

### *New Imperialism*

This belief, so strong at one time, began, however, gradually to weaken, when it was seen that English administrators were not in practice as ready to advance along lines of constitutional development as had been hoped and that the bulk of Englishmen in the country were far from friendly even to the most reasonable aspirations of Indians in political matters. With the rise of the new Imperialism in England during the last quarter of a century, new

and clear signs became visible of a disinclination on the part of the ruling nation to carry into effect the policy to which it stood committed. Then indeed the faith of Indian reformers in the character and purposes of British rule, already tried by a feeling of suspicion, began definitely to give way. Suspicion was followed by surprise, by disappointment, by anger, and these inevitably produced a rapidly rising anti-English feeling which especially affected the younger minds throughout the country. Things now came to be regarded in a new light. The old readiness to acknowledge freely and gratefully the benefits which India had derived from the British connection gave way to a tendency to indulge in bitter and fault-finding criticism, directed indiscriminately against everything done by Englishmen. "Wrong in the one thing rare," what mattered it to the Indians what Englishmen did, or how they conducted themselves in other respects?

### *English Statesmanship to the Rescue*

While this development was taking place within the borders of India, the whole East was already being driven by those mysterious forces, which shape great events, to a new life, in which a new longing to enjoy the solid advantages of a constitutional government and realize the dignity of nationhood, was combined with a new pride in the special culture and civilization of the East, a new impatience of Western aggression and Western domination and a new faith in the destiny of Eastern peoples. India could not but be affected by those thought-currents with the rest of Asia, and the influences at work naturally received a powerful stimulus when Japan astonished the world with her victories over Russia. The steady growth of the anti-English feeling in the country was recognized by all thoughtful persons to be fraught with a serious menace to the cause of peaceful progress and the outlook was undoubtedly very dark, when English statesmanship came to the rescue and by granting to the country a measure of constitutional reform, sufficiently substantial to meet the more pressing requirements of the day, helped largely to ease the tension and restore a more friendly feeling between the two sides.

There is no doubt whatever that the reform measures of two years ago arrested the growing estrangement between Europeans and Indians in India, and since then the situation has undergone a steady and continuous change for the better. So marked is this change over the greater part of the country that there are many who hold that the desire to understand each other and respect each other's feelings and susceptibilities was never so great as it is at the present moment. For how long these relations will thus continue to improve, and whether they will again tend to grow worse, and if so when, are questions more difficult to answer. It is well to remember that certain causes are constantly at work to produce misunderstandings and make harmonious relations between the two sides a matter of considerable difficulty. Thus the differences in temperament, the natural predisposition to look at questions from different standpoints, the tone habitually adopted by a section of the Press both English and

Indian, these make a demand on the patience of either side, which it is not always easy to meet. Then there are those cases of personal ill-treatment—happily rarer now than before—which, from time to time, attract public attention and cause infinite mischief—cases in which Indians are found to suffer insult and even violence at the hands of individual Englishmen for no other reason than that they are Indians. These are, so to say, among the standing factors of the situation, and they must, I fear, be accepted as inevitable, at any rate, in the present circumstances of the country. Were these the only elements tending to give rise to misunderstanding and friction, the matter would be comparatively simple, for the interests which depend on the two communities working together with a sufficient degree of harmony are so vast and of such paramount importance to both that it would not be a very difficult task to keep within reasonable limits such misunderstanding and friction, whenever it arose.

### *England's Objective towards India*

But the real sources of trouble, which invest the future with uncertainty, lie much deeper. Is British rule to remain a rigidly foreign rule, as it lasts, or will it conform more and more to standards which alone may be accepted in these days as compatible with the self-respect of civilized people? What is to be the objective of England's policy in India? How is the conflict of interest between the two communities to be reconciled and what sacrifices may be reasonably expected from either side to render such reconciliation a living and potent reality? These and other allied questions, which really go to the root of England's connection with India, have to be answered before any prediction about the probable future of the relations between the Englishmen and Indians in India can be hazarded. The opinion is often expressed that if only Indians and Europeans will mix more largely socially, or if Indians will participate in the games and sports of Englishmen in greater numbers, a better understanding between the two sides will be established, resulting in better relations generally. There is, of course, a certain amount of truth in this and it is necessary to acknowledge that earnest efforts, very recently made in several places by prominent members of the two communities to provide facilities for a better social intercourse, have contributed their share to the improvement in the situation that has taken place. But apart from the fact that such freer intercourse, unless it is restricted to individuals on either side, who are anxious to see each other's good points and are tolerant to each other's weaknesses, may produce difficulties of its own. I am firmly persuaded that as long as the consciousness of political inequality continues to be behind such intercourse, it cannot carry us far. I have no doubt that there are Englishmen in India who put away from them all thought of such inequality in their dealings with Indians, and there are also Indians who are not influenced by this consideration in their relations with Englishmen. But when this admission is made, the fact remains that as things are today, the humblest English-

man in the country goes about with the prestige of the whole Empire behind him, whereas the proudest and most distinguished Indian cannot shake off from himself a certain sense that he belongs to a subject race. The soul of social friendship is mutual appreciation and respect, which ordinarily is not found to co-exist with a consciousness of inequality. This does not mean that where equality does not exist, the relations are necessarily unfriendly. It is not an uncommon thing for a party which is in what may be called a state of subordinate dependence on another to be warmly attached to that other party. But such relations are only possible if the subordinate party, assuming of course, that its sense of self respect is properly developed, is enabled to feel that its dependent state is necessary in its own interest and that the other party is taking no undue advantage of it for other ends. And this, I think, is roughly the position as between India and England.

### *Cultural Understanding between Europeans and Indians*

It must be admitted that the present inequality between Englishmen and Indians, as regards their political status can only be reduced by degrees and that a considerable period must elapse before it is removed altogether. Meanwhile Indians must be content to continue in a position of subordinate dependence and the extent to which "a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings and a heartier co operation" can be promoted between them and Englishmen, must depend upon how they are enabled to realize that British rule is necessary for their progress and that British policy in India has no other aim than their advancement. Any doubt on this point in the Indian mind will mean the weakening of the tie which binds the two countries and will not fail in the end to nullify the most beneficent administrative measures. Assured on this point, on the other hand, Indians will not allow even serious administrative mistakes to alienate them in feeling or sympathy from the country under whose sway they find themselves placed and with whose guidance they hope to advance to their appointed destiny.

It may appear to some that too much stress is being laid in this paper on what may be termed the political development of the people of India and that no attempt is being made to discuss how, leaving political considerations alone, Europeans and Indians may be helped to acquire a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of each other's special culture and civilization and how a heartier co operation may be established between them in the pursuit of knowledge, or the service of humanity — "for the greater glory of God and the relief of man's estate." So far as the understanding of Europe by India is concerned, the work is being carried on with great vigour under the auspices of the Indian Universities which have now been in existence for more than fifty years. The very object of these Universities is to promote Western learning in the land and successive generations of Indian students have been and are being introduced by them to a study of Western literature and history, Western philosophy and Western sciences. And various missionary bodies



terious and wonderful drama, her resolve to help forward this advance must be firm and irrevocable and not dependent on the views, predilections or sympathies of individual administrators, whom she may, from time to time, charge with the direction of Indian affairs. I think the time has come when a definite pronouncement on this subject should be made by the highest authority entitled to speak in the name of England, and the British Government in India should keep such pronouncement in view in all its actions. There is a class of thinkers and writers among Englishmen with whom it is an axiom that Oriental people have no desire, at any rate, no capacity for representative institutions. This cool and convenient assumption is not standing the test of experience and in any case no self-respecting Indian will accept it, and it is astonishing that those men who thus seek to shut the door in the face of Indian aspirations, do not realize how thereby they turn the Indian mind against those very interests for whose support they probably evolve their theories.

### *Requisites of Improved Relations*

The first requisite then of improved relations, on an enduring basis, between Englishmen and Indians, is an unequivocal declaration on England's part of her resolve to help forward the growth of representative institutions in India and a determination to stand by this policy, in spite of all temptations or difficulties. The second requisite is that Indians should be enabled to feel that the Government, under which they live, whatever its personnel, is largely and in an ever-increasing measure, *national* in spirit and sentiment and in its devotion to the moral and material interests of the country. Thus, outside India, Indians should feel the protecting arm of the British Government behind them, ready to help them in resisting oppression and injustice. The monstrous indignities and ill treatment to which the people of this country are being subjected in South Africa, have aroused the bitterest resentment throughout the land. On the other hand, the recent action of the Government of India in prohibiting the supply of indentured labour from this country to Natal has evoked a feeling of deep and widespread satisfaction, which cannot fail to have its effect on the general relations between Europeans and Indians in the country. Among matters bearing on the moral and material well-being of the people, the Government should lose no more time now in dealing with education in all its branches, in a national spirit — especially with mass education and technical education. It is a humiliating reflection that while in most other civilized countries universal elementary education has long been accepted as one of the first duties of the State, while within the borders of India itself the Feudatory State of Baroda has found it practicable to introduce a system of free and compulsory primary education for both boys and girls. In India seven children out of eight are still allowed to grow up in ignorance and darkness, and four villages out of five are without a school.<sup>1</sup> And as regards technical education, while our Engineering Colleges, which were started as far back as fifty years ago, are still training only subordinates for the Public Works Department of

Government, Japan, starting much later, has already provided herself with a complete system of technical education in all its grades.

The third requisite, on which it is necessary to insist, is that England should send out to India less and less of those who are not of her best. From the best Englishmen, Indians have yet to learn a great deal and their presence in the country will strengthen and not weaken India's appreciation of what she owes to England. But it should be realized that though the Indian average is still inferior to the English average and will continue to be so for some time, individual Indians are to be found in all parts of the country, who, in character, capacity and attainments, will be able to hold their own anywhere. And when Englishmen, inferior to such men, are introduced into the country and placed in higher positions, a sense of unfairness and injustice comes to pervade the whole Indian community, which is very prejudicial to the cultivation or maintenance of good feeling. Fewer and better men, sent out from England, better paid if necessary, will prevent England's prestige from being lowered in India, and this in present circumstances is a consideration of great importance. The fourth and last requisite that I would like to mention is the extreme necessity of such Englishmen as come out to this country realizing the profound wisdom of the advice urged on them some time ago by Lord Morley, that while bad manners are a fault everywhere they are in India "a crime". I think Englishmen in India cannot be too careful in this respect.

### *India's Great Destiny*

The only safe thing that any one can say about the future of India is that it is still enveloped in obscurity, but I believe whole-heartedly in a great destiny for the people of my land. We still retain many of those characteristics which once placed us in the van of the world's civilization—the depth of our spirituality, our serene outlook on life, our conceptions of domestic and social duty. And other races that have from time to time come to make their home here have brought their own treasure into the common stock. The India of the future will be compounded of all these elements reinforcing one another, but a long process of discipline and purification and real adjustment is necessary, before she gathers again the strength required for her allotted task. In this work of preparation, it has been given to a great Western nation to guide and help her. And if craven or selfish counsels are not allowed to prevail, England will have played the noblest international part that has yet fallen to the lot of humanity. When the men and women of India begin again to grow to the full height of their stature and proclaim to the world the mission that shall be theirs, a great stream of moral and spiritual energy, long lost to view, will have returned to its channel, and East and West, white and dark and yellow and brown—all have cause alike to rejoice.

## INDIAN RECEPTION TO GOKHALE

*A reception in honour of Gokhale, which had been organised by the Indian community in London was held on July 19, 1912. The chair was taken by Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree*<sup>1</sup>

Gokhale, who was received with loud applause, returned at the outset his warm and sincere thanks to the gathering for the honour done to him, and to the chairman, for his generous words of appreciation. To an Indian, he said, it was a peculiar pleasure to have an opportunity of exchanging greetings with his fellow countrymen who were resident in this country, temporarily or otherwise, and the presence of so many Indian ladies and gentlemen wafted them in spirit to their beloved motherland and surrounded them with an Indian atmosphere. The kind and graceful presence of a few English ladies and gentlemen went only to emphasize the essentially Indian character of the gathering. The patriotic sentiments to which the chairman had given such eloquent and powerful expression showed that, whatever their differences might be on this or that question, the hearts of all Indians, whatever distance separated them from the motherland, were turned towards her — and their best hopes were bound up with her future. That was not the first, the second, or even the third time when he was enjoying the privilege of addressing a gathering of his fellow-countrymen in the heart of the British Empire. But he would say on this occasion that never before had he spoken to Indians in this country with more confidence or more glad hope in his heart or a clearer vision as to what awaited them in the future.

It was three years since the reforms, with which the names of Lord Morley<sup>2</sup> and Lord Minto<sup>3</sup> would always be associated, were introduced into the administration of India. And, serious as were the defects in the scheme — and no one knew more than those who were actually working in the Councils how serious they were — there was already a great change produced in their country. A new spirit, so to say, was already abroad in the land. The administration was being impressed in various directions by the hopes and the views of leading Indian representatives and he was quite sure that, as year followed year, the full benefits of that scheme of reforms would become more and more visible.

### *Three Planks in the Platform*

Roughly speaking, there were three planks in the platform of the National Progressive Party in India. They, first of all, were engaged in a struggle to im-

<sup>1</sup> SIR MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE (1851-1933), Judicial Counsellor, Bhavnagar, settled in London elected to Parliament in Conservative interest (1895), Chairman, Parsee Association of Europe

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 23      <sup>3</sup> See foot-note on p. 71.

prove their status in this Empire — their status both as Indians individually and as Indians taken as a community. Their status in regard to public service, the treatment they received in different parts of the Empire — that was one part of that struggle. The other part was the steady liberalization of the institutions under which they lived in their own country; in other words, the attainment by them gradually of self-governing institutions for India. That was the first plank of their platform. Then their work had to be directed towards securing a redress of specific grievances, which were more or less the result of bad or defective administration. That, too, was important work, but from one point of view it was not so important as the first which he had spoken of. The third part of their programme was the promotion of constructive measures for the moral and material improvement of the masses of their people. Now the change that had been brought about by the new scheme of reforms was this: that, in regard to the second plank — namely, securing a redress of specific grievances which were the result of an abuse of official power — they need not now ordinarily come to this country, they need not now appeal to the Secretary of State or to Parliament, except, of course in the case of very serious grievances. For the most part they had now power in their own Councils to raise such questions effectively — to get redress of such grievances on the spot. That was as regards the second plank. And as regards the first and third — namely, the improvement of their status, individually and collectively, and the promotion of constructive measures for the moral and material advancement of their people, — public workers in India, as a result of the new scheme reforms, were now in a much stronger position than before. Thus they really had better opportunities now of serving their country all along the line and that was one of the main reasons which fill him with hope and confidence and enabled him to look at the future with a clearer vision than ever before.

But they must remember, in speaking of their political progress, that it was not so much what the English rulers of the country did as what they did themselves on which their future really depended. Their aim, briefly was that they should practically be in their own part of the Empire, what the people in other parts were in theirs, and that there should be no artificial barriers to prevent their men and women from growing to the full height of their stature. All disabilities were a grievance, not only because they were wrong in themselves, but because they kept those who were under them from growing to their full height. It was therefore a duty which they owed to themselves to strive for getting rid of every disability. They would be unworthy of the esteem of civilized people if they did not do that.

Now with that aim, what were the steps which they should keep in view? It was necessary to recognize that their difficulties were far more formidable than those which confronted any other people anywhere else, and their progress was bound to be slow. But it need not be as slow as it had been, and it really depended upon work that they did for themselves. If they asked him what should now be their chief aim for the near future — and it was only the

near future with which they need trouble themselves — the rest was in higher hands than theirs, and there was no sense in quarrelling as to what the distant future should bring them — he would unhesitatingly say that their aim should be the attainment of what had been conveniently described as provincial autonomy in India.

### *Provincial Autonomy*

They would remember that, in the dispatches that were published on the occasion of the Coronation Durbar at Delhi, there was one passage which then gave very special satisfaction to the people of India. It was the passage which practically announced that the Government of India accepted this policy of advancing towards provincial autonomy. Unfortunately, attempts had recently been made to explain away that passage, and, considering the high quarter from which those attempts came, some of his countrymen felt more or less disconcerted. He would, however, say to them that there was no need to be so disconcerted, for these were matters that were not so much in the hands of English statesmen as they were in their own hands. Moreover, there were forces mightier than any statesman, mightier than all statesmen put together, that were moulding the destinies of all the East, and of India among the Eastern nations, and if only they would have faith in themselves, and were determined to work for their salvation, as they ought no statement of policy, no interpretation of any passage, no matter from whom it came, could long stand in the way of their just advance. Lord Crewe,<sup>1</sup> to whose recent utterance in the House of Lords he was referring, was a high minded and earnest well-wisher of India—it was due to him to acknowledge that—and Gokhale would not say that he had put that interpretation upon the passage owing to the exigencies of debate. He was prepared to take it as Lord Crewe's personal conviction about the future of India, but Lord Crewe would be the first to admit that he had no power to bind the future, and in any case, whatever view Lord Crewe held, they were entitled to work for their country as they thought proper. And they would work for provincial autonomy—they deemed it their duty to work for that end.

He might be asked what practical steps he had in view and he would answer that briefly. They knew that, under the new scheme of reforms, in all the provinces, non official majorities had been established in the Councils. That was an important step forward, and they owed it to Lord Morley. All the Councils had now the power of raising debates on administrative matters, they could move resolutions on such matters, and after they had been debated the Councils could divide on them. The non official majorities today were, how-

<sup>1</sup> MARQUESS OF CREWE (1858-1945) Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1892-95), Leader House of Lords (1908) Colonial Secretary (1908), Secretary for India (1910-15), British Ambassador in Paris (1922-25)

ever, more or less manipulated all over the country. A considerable number of non-official members were nominated by Government, and in practice many of them could be safely relied on to vote with the Government as much as the officials themselves. Of course, that was only a transitional stage, and in any case, a non-official majority was better than an official majority. But they were entitled to ask — and the demand was bound to be irresistible — that these non-official majorities should be elected majorities. He asked them to follow him along that line of thought. The non-official majorities were bound, sooner or later, to be turned into elected majorities. That by itself, however, would not suffice. If they were quarrelling among themselves in the country, if their differences kept them apart outside the Councils, their elected representatives would be quarrelling inside the Councils. But if and as the feeling of solidarity grew more and more among the different sections of the community in the country, their representatives in Councils would work together with closer co-operation, the elected majorities would then become more and more powerful in the Councils. If, therefore, they had any faith in their future, if they understood what the situation required they would all work in order to promote more and more solidarity among the different sections of their people — and that was in their own hands. The elected majorities were bound to come and with greater solidarity in the country and closer co-operation in the Councils they would be able not only to raise debates on important questions of administration, but pass resolutions on them. It was true that the resolutions would still be recommendations, which the Government might accept or veto. But if their elected representatives worked together and passed resolutions on important subjects, no wise Government would veto those resolutions year after year. And when the Government recognized in practice the binding character of the resolutions adopted in their Councils, with elected majorities, they would not be far from provincial autonomy. Whatever interpretation, therefore, Lord Crewe might put on that passage, they must remember that, in the first place, the passage was there and secondly, that the realization of the aim indicated was now more or less in their own hands. Let them not, therefore be disconcerted, but with faith in themselves, go on working.

### *The Work Before Them*

There was one more thing which he must mention in that connexion. He had said that their future depended largely on the work they did for themselves. If they asked him what was the character of the work they had got to do, he should say, roughly, it was three-fold. In the first place they had got to build up a higher average of character and capacity in their country. Let them analyze the situation. They were in the position in which they found themselves not because they were wanting in men of great, even commanding, personality — they had such men in their country — but because their average was far inferior to the British average. It was best to speak frankly, especially

as he was speaking to his own countrymen. They undoubtedly had among them individuals who would hold their own, and more than hold their own against individuals of any other country in the world, but it was their average that was inferior to the Western average, and, after all, the weight of the edifice of self-government rested not upon a few individuals merely, but upon the average strength of the people. They had, therefore, to build up a stronger average in their country. That was their first requirement.

Secondly, there must be less and less of disunion and differences, and more and more of that feeling of solidarity of which he had already spoken. And lastly — and here also he wanted to speak in the same frank spirit — their patriotism, their public spirit, must be more intense, more whole-hearted, more free from all thought of self. In that respect things were undoubtedly improving, but still there was enormous room for improvement. The feeling of patriotism, which inspired them, which urged them on, must be more vigorous and selfless if the vast problems that faced them were to be successfully solved. These were the three real requirements of the situation.

Now, the building up of a higher average of character and capacity must obviously depend upon the spread of mass education. The mass of their countrymen must be brought under the influence of education before they could expect a higher level of intelligence or higher national efficiency in the country. The question of universal education lay really at the root of all progress and they must therefore now concentrate themselves on it. Whatever differences tend to separate them in other respects, all must now concentrate upon that one supreme need of their country — namely, free and compulsory education throughout the country. When they had done that, they would have taken a long step along the line of advance they so much desired, and the rest was only a question of time, for with a higher average many things might become possible to them which, unfortunately, were not possible today. Let them remember that it was for them really a question of character and capacity, not of numbers — they had numbers more than enough. The general level of character and capacity depended broadly upon the diffusion of education.

#### *Hindus and Mahomedans*

As regards their differences, he was happy to detect signs which showed that the worst part of the crisis through which they recently passed was over, and that already a distinct change for the better was visible, both on the side of Hindus and of Mahomedans. Now here there was ample field for the most patriotic endeavour. It was a duty they owed to themselves to lend their best energies to the promotion of greater and greater harmony between these great communities. The India, of the future, let them remember always, could not now be only a Hindu India, or a Mahomedan India, it must be compounded of all the elements which existed at present in India — Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsee, Christian, aye, and the Englishman who adopted India as his country.

And they all could do something for that great cause. Every word they uttered, every action they performed, should help to promote by a continual process greater solidarity among them all, seeking in one way and another to remove those differences which had, unfortunately, kept them so long apart.

The third, and in some respects the most difficult part of their work, was to cultivate a higher, a purer, a stronger, a more intense, a more self-sacrificing form of patriotism than what inspired them at present. Did they think that any Western people, if they were circumstanced as the Indian people were circumstanced, would lead the easy, quiet lives that they did? He was not talking of violence or physical force. Did they think that any Western people would be content to move in their allotted grooves just like dumb, driven cattle — as they were doing?

### *The Need of Self-Sacrifice*

Of the many Indians who had come under Western influences during the last fifty or sixty years, how few really were they whose hearts had been stirred, as they should have been stirred, in the service of their motherland? How few were really they who were prepared to come forward and give the best that was in them to their country without thought of self and with the single desire that India might hold her head higher among the nations of the world than she did? In other countries young men and old men and middle-aged men had been called upon time after time to sacrifice even their lives for their country. *Their situation did not demand of them that supreme sacrifice. But could not a sufficient number of them recognize and accept the duty of living for their country? Unless they did that, unless there were among them enough men and women who placed their country first, second, last in their thoughts, they might talk about upraising their country as much as they liked, it would remain talk and be nothing more. The whole spirit, therefore, of their lives, so far as their country was concerned, must undergo a change. They had more up'hil work to do than the people of other countries, and therefore their lives had needs to be even more strenuous than those of other people. Let them, then, throw themselves with all the energy, with all the enthusiasm of which they were capable, into the work of building up in their country a higher average of capacity and character. Let them devote themselves by every word and by every deed to the promotion of greater solidarity, of closer co-operation among the different sections of their countrymen. And, finally, let them see to it that the springs of their work for their country were quite pure, that all thought of self in connexion with it was felt to be a sacrilege, and that they were prepared to shrink from no sacrifice in the service of their motherland.*

### *A Word to the Young*

One word more which he would address to the young men present, and he would be done. He always claimed a special privilege in addressing young men — for he had given twenty years of his life to educational work among them, and he hoped they would not look upon it as presumption that he should



talk to them as he was going to do. They were here in this land of wonderful achievement, and what they saw around them should make them reflect on why things were different in India. God had given to them in India a wonderful country, and let them think of what they had made of it. God had given Western people countries — countries not so well endowed as their beloved India was — and yet, see what they had made of their countries. If any Indians could understand what Western patriotism was like, the young men of India who were in this country could understand that. If any Indians could realize what was wrong with their country, and what the situation there really required, the young men of India who were in this country should be able to realize it. It was only by combining what was best in the West with what was best in the East that they could hope to march forward, and who was better qualified to understand that than they? And yet, with all this reflection, with all this understanding, how few of them, when they went back, would really give themselves up to the service of their motherland? Let them ask themselves that question. Not all of them, of course, were in the position to devote their whole lives to public work. Some of them would have to earn their living first, both for themselves and for those who were dependent upon them. But there must be a considerable number among those who were present upon whom there lay no such burden, and yet he was afraid that they too would go and do just like the rest — either enter into the Government service or devote themselves to some exacting profession, leaving them little time or opportunity for serving their country.

Now, was that to be really the end of all their patriotic thoughts and aspirations and visions? They spoke of the service under Government as public service in India. That, of course, was technically correct, but the expression 'public service' must now have a new meaning for them. Instead of the paid service of the Government, it should mean the voluntary, unpaid service of the country and of the people. Instead of its meaning work done in obedience to official orders, it should stand for the free and spontaneous homage of the heart, offered day and night, to the mother who had given them birth. If but some of them — if only a few of them — would come forward to devote their lives to that higher public service, what influence could they not hope to exercise, what part could they not play in moulding their own destinies? And with a continuous succession of such men working in their land, whatever difficulties might have to be encountered, they could all see, they would all feel that the future was with them. Sometimes young men said to him 'Show us the path which will lead to assured success.' He frankly confessed no one could show them such a path. But he would say to them 'Groped and you will find the path. Grope, and the light will show itself.' When a sufficient number among them came forward to serve India in that spirit, serve her with the love that binds and the faith that overcomes, seeking for themselves nothing but the joy of a consecrated life, then, but not till then, will it be all well with India.

PART IV

INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

## BRITISH INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

*The following article from the pen of Gokhale appeared in "The India" (the National Congress organ published in London) of June 1897*

### *Delusion of Equality*

The memorial which the British Indians in Natal have recently submitted to Mr Chamberlain unfolds a tale which no Indian can read without bitterness, and no right minded Englishman ought to read without a feeling of deep shame and indignation. We all know how Wordsworth, in one of his sonnets, recalls that a Roman master once stood on Grecian ground and to the people assembled there proclaimed the liberty of Greece, and that the proclamation filled the fallen Greeks with wild delight and we know with what severe dignity the poet reproves the folly of the Greeks in imagining that liberty could thus be bestowed by one nation on another as a gift. Not all the blended powers of earth and heaven can do that, he exclaims. It must be acquired by a people for itself and deserved before it can be acquired. If this is true of Liberty, I believe it is even more true of that other moral principle which occupied with Liberty so prominent a place in the early creed of the French Revolution—Equality. If Statutes and Proclamations—the spontaneous gifts of Parliaments and Sovereigns—could place a subject people on a footing of equality with their conquerors, the people of India had occupied a proud, a glorious position indeed today. For more than sixty years, this delusion of equality has been kept up, and it has beguiled many of us to live in that paradise which the wise man avoids. I do not pretend that even during all this time, this equality has been anything more than mere paper-equality, if such an expression may be allowed, or that prevarication and subterfuge have not been used by the representatives of the ruling race to get out of the obligations imposed upon them by their promises and declarations. But the very fact of their resorting to such means clearly indicated the moral strength of our position, and left us ground for hoping that in course of time we might so appeal to the conscience of Englishmen that their sense of honour would triumph over their selfishness, and that we might at last have that justice done to us which, though long delayed, had never been irrevocably denied. The Englishmen of Natal, however, seem anxious to give us a rough shaking, and wake us to a truer, though more disagreeable, sense of the situation. And by a curious irony of fate, the year of the Diamond Jubilee of Her Gracious Majesty's reign is selected to bring home forcibly to our minds the fact that, after all, we are only British slaves, and not British subjects, and that it is idle on our part to expect justice or fair treatment where it does not suit the interests of Englishmen to be just or fair.

At the beginning of this century, England strove nobly for the emancipation of the slaves. Who would have thought that in the closing years of this self-same century, some of her children would endeavour to proclaim the doom of practical slavery for three hundred millions of people under her own flag—for one-sixth of the whole human race—and that she would quietly look on while this outrage was perpetrated in her name !

The Government of India has always been prompt in giving adequate protection to its English subjects, in whatever quarter of the globe they may need it. Will it not raise even a feeble protest, when the members of a British colony insult its Indian subjects in the most shameful manner, say that they are only black vermin, and not men, that they can live on the smell of an oily rag, that they breed like rabbits, and that it was a pity that they could not be shot down, and so forth, and so forth ? The bitter mockery of the assertion that we are British subjects, or that we have a Government to look after our interests, was never made plainer than by this Natal business.

### *Anti-Indian Demonstration in Natal*

The numerous disabilities, which have been imposed on the Indians in South Africa by men who are among the foremost in their denunciation of President Kruger for his treatment of the Uitlanders, have often been set forth and discussed in the pages of this journal, and I have no wish to enter into them on this occasion. My purpose in writing this paper is merely to call pointed attention to the leading facts connected with the anti-Indian demonstration that took place in Natal on 13th January, 1897, which was intended to prevent the landing of certain Indian passengers on board the SS. " Courland " and SS. " Naderi, " and which culminated in a cowardly and disgraceful attempt to lynch a highly-cultured and respected Indian gentleman—an attempt that still goes unpunished. These facts are few, but they will not fail to convey to the Indian mind a lesson and a warning which will not be easily forgotten.

### *Reuter's Misrepresentation*

In August, 1896, a certain Sugar Company in Natal applied to the Immigration Trust Board, *indenting for a certain number of skilled Indian labourers*. The Board granted the application. As soon, however, as the information was published in the newspapers, a violent storm of indignation arose in the Colony, and an agitation against the influx of any more Indians was set on foot. As a result, the Sugar Company grew apprehensive and withdrew its application; but that failed to satisfy the agitators, who now wanted to rid the Colony of Indians altogether. While the public mind was thus excited, a press telegram to the following effect was despatched by Reuter's Agency in Bombay to Natal :

A pamphlet published in India declares that the Indians in Natal are robbed and assaulted and treated like beasts, and are unable to obtain redress. *The Times of India* advocates an inquiry into these allegations.

We all know that Reuter is no friend to India. But there are limits to misrepresentation beyond which even he is expected not to go. The result of his mischievous telegram was naturally to add fuel to the fire. The pamphlet was a statement of the grievances of the British Indians in South Africa by Mr M K Gandhi, who had been deputed by the Indians in Natal to represent to their countrymen in India the grievances from which they suffered, and to secure the co operation of Indian authorities and Indian public bodies in their struggle for their redress. That there was nothing in this pamphlet to justify Reuter's description of its contents became abundantly clear to every fair-minded man in Natal when copies of the pamphlet itself arrived there. But, meanwhile, the mischief had been already done. The two leading newspapers of Natal, *The Natal Mercury* and *The Natal Advertiser*, thus expressed themselves on the point. Said *The Mercury*

Mr Gandhi on his part, and on behalf of his countrymen, has done nothing that he is not entitled to do, and from his point of view the principle that he is working for is an honourable and legitimate one. He is within his rights, and, so long as he acts honestly and in a straightforward manner, he cannot be blamed or interfered with. So far as we know, he has always done so, and his latest pamphlet we cannot honestly say is an unfair statement of the case, from his point of view. Reuter's cable is a gross exaggeration of Mr Gandhi's statement. He enumerates only a number of grievances, but these by no means justify anyone in stating that his pamphlet declares that the Indians in Natal are robbed and assaulted and treated like beasts, and are unable to obtain redress.

*The Advertiser* wrote -

A perusal of Mr Gandhi's pamphlet, recently published in Bombay, leads to the conclusion that the telegraphic description of its objects and contents was considerably exaggerated. True, Mr. Gandhi complains of a certain amount of ill-treatment of indentured Indians, but there is nothing to warrant the statement that he alleges that the Indians in Natal are robbed, assaulted, and treated like beasts. His is rather the old familiar grievance that the Indian is regarded and treated by Europeans as belonging to a separate class and race, and not one of themselves. From Mr Gandhi's point of view this is very deplorable, and it is easy to sympathise with him and his compatriots.

But, while this change of opinion was slow in coming, and even when it came, affected only the thoughtful few in Natal, the organizers of the anti Indian agitation were doing their best to take advantage of Reuter's misrepresentation and rouse the worst feelings of many of the colonists against the Indian settlers. On 18th September, 1896, an Association called the European Patriotic Association, was formed in Mauritzburg the object of which was the practical exclusion of the Indians from the Colony. Two months later, another Association for the same object was established in Durban, called the Colonial Patriotic Association. The Association drew up and circulated for signatures

a petition, libelling and maligning the Indians as persons whose presence in the Colony was harmful to the best interests of British supremacy in South Africa. While the popular mind was thus in a high state of ferment, on 18th December arrived at Durban the two ill-fated ships mentioned above, viz., the "Courland" and the "Naderi," with about 600 Indians on board, one of them being Mr. Gandhi. This was a signal for the agitators to lose their heads completely, and then the Colony entered upon a course of conduct of which its thoughtful members are already ashamed. The agitators decided to prevent the Indian passengers from landing at all costs, and the Natal Government so far forgot its duty and its dignity that it lent a more or less open countenance to the proceedings of the mob. The steamers had an absolutely clean bill of health during the voyage, and yet the Health Officer directed that they should be in quarantine until twenty-three days had elapsed since leaving Bombay. On the next day a proclamation appeared in the *Government Gazette Extraordinary*, declaring Bombay to be an infected port. But, after all, this twenty-three days' quarantine did not mean much, as the steamers had already taken eighteen days between Bombay and Durban, and the Durban mob therefore thought that the Health Officer had treated the Indian vessels indulgently. He was accordingly suspended, and one Dr. Birtwell was put in his place. As soon as the twenty-three days from Bombay were over, the ships claimed *pratique*, but, instead of granting that, Dr. Birtwell and a Superintendent of Police boarded the ships, examined the passengers and crew, gave instructions as to disinfection, fumigation, and burning of soiled clothes, mats, baskets, and other articles, and imposed a further quarantine of twelve days. This happened on 24th December. On the 29th, Dr. Birtwell again visited the vessels, and expressed himself satisfied with the work of disinfection and fumigation already carried out, but at the same time extended the period of quarantine to twelve days from the 29th December. The masters of the two vessels made urgent representations to Government that as the clothes, bedding, etc., of the passengers had been destroyed, under its order, it should supply new blankets to the poor people, as they suffered greatly from wet and cold. No notice whatsoever was taken of these representations. In fact, if the Natal Government had been anxious that there should be an outbreak of sickness on board the ships, it could not have taken more effective steps to secure that object. What the Government would not do was, however, done by the Indian residents in Durban, who started a Quarantine Relief Fund, whereby blankets were supplied to all the passengers on both the ships, as also food-stuffs to poor passengers free of charge, involving altogether an expense of about £125.

### *Barbarous Treatment of Indians*

The masters of the ships did everything in their power to protest against the barbarous treatment to which their passengers were subjected, and the loss which had been inflicted on themselves. Government, however, paid

absolutely no heed to their remonstrances. At last, on 12th January, they sent the following ultimatum to Government

The steamers have now been at the outer anchorage for twenty-four days, at a cost of £150 per diem to us, and this being so, you will see the reasonableness of your giving us a full answer by noon to-morrow. And we think it right to inform you that failing a definite reply giving us an assurance that we shall be paid £150 per diem from Sunday last, and that you are taking steps to suppress the rioters, so as to enable us to disembark the steamers, preparations will be at once commenced to steam into the harbour, relying on the protection which, we respectfully submit, Government is bound to give us.

The ultimatum proved effective, and elicited the following reply on the 13th January

The port captain has been instructed that the steamers shall be ready to cross the bar inwards at 12 o'clock today. The Government needs no reminder of its responsibility for the maintenance of order.

The dignity of the Government was offended, but a definite answer was at last secured.

But, while the Government of Natal was inflicting what hardships it could on the Indian passengers by abusing its powers in the matter of imposing quarantine, the mob of Durban was not idle. The following notice appeared in *The Natal Advertiser* on the 30th December over the signature of "Harry Sparks, Chairman of Preliminary Meeting", one of her Majesty's commissioned officers.

Wanted every man in Durban to attend a meeting to be held in the large room in the Victoria Cafe, on Monday, the 4th January, at 8 o'clock, for the purpose of arranging a demonstration to proceed to the Point to protest against the landing of Asiatics.

At the meeting held accordingly, about two thousand persons bound themselves to do what they could to prevent the landing of the Indian passengers. The speeches delivered were worthy of the agitation. One passage may be quoted here as a sample. Dr Mackenzie said in the course of his speech.

Mr Gandhi,—(prolonged hissing and hooting)—that gentleman came to Natal and settled in the borough of Durban. He was received here freely and openly, all the privileges and advantages which the Colony could afford him were at his disposal. No contracting or circumscribing influence was brought to play upon him any more than on the audience or himself (the speaker), and he had all the privileges of their hospitality. In return, Mr Gandhi had accused the Colonists of Natal of having dealt unfairly with Indians, and of having abused and robbed and swindled them. (A voice 'You can't swindle a coolie') He (the doctor) quite agreed with that. Mr Gandhi had returned to India and dragged them in the gutters, and painted them as black and filthy as his own skin. (Applause) And this was what they might call in Indian parlance

an honourable and manly return for the privileges which Natal had allowed him. . . . It was the intention of these facile and delicate creatures to make themselves proprietors of the only thing that the rulers of this country had withheld from them—the franchise. It was their intention to put themselves in parliament and legislate for the Europeans, to take over the household management and put the Europeans in the kitchen. . . . Their country had decided that they had enough Asiatics and Indians here, and they were going to treat them fairly and well, provided they behaved themselves; but if they were going to associate themselves with such men as Gandhi, and abuse their hospitality, and act in the way he had done, they might expect the same kind of treatment that was to be meted out to him (Applause). However great a misfortune it might be for those people, he could not get over the distinction between black and white.

The resolutions passed at the meeting were communicated to Government, who wrote back in reply :

I am to state that the closest attention has been, is being, and will be given to this question, the extreme importance of which the Government most completely recognizes. Government is in full sympathy with the consensus of public opinion in this Colony as regards the desirability of preventing the over-running of the Colony by the Asiatics.

### *Indians Not Wanted in Natal*

Another meeting of a similar character was held on the 7th January, and finally it was resolved to go to the Point to "receive" the Indian passengers and tell them that they were not wanted in the Colony. The mob present at the meeting promised that "when they got to the Point they would put themselves under their leader, and do exactly what he told them, if he told them to do anything." Meanwhile, to intimidate the passengers, a letter was written to them by Captain Sparks, "to acquaint them with the state of feeling in the Colony," and they were told that, if they attempted to land, they would run great risk of personal injury. A similar intimation was conveyed by the Government to the masters of the two vessels, but happily the passengers remained firm and thus on the 13th January the two steamers got ready for disembarking.

The scene at the landing, and some incidents connected with it, cannot be better described than in the language of the memorial itself :

Long before the owners were informed that the ships were to be brought in that day, the town knew it. The bugles to rally were sounded at 10.30 a.m., the shopkeepers put up their shutters, and people began to flock to the Point. The following is an account of the muster at the Point taken from *The Natal Advertiser* : ' Shortly before 12 o'clock the muster on Alexander Square was completed, and as far as could be ascertained, the sections were as follows : Railwaymen, 100 to 1,000—Wylie, leader;



assistants G Whelan, W. Coles, Grant, Erlsmout, Dick, Duke, Russell, Calder, Titheridge Yacht Club, Point Club, and Rowing Club, 150—Mr Dan Taylor, leader, assistants Anderton, Goldsbury, Hutton, Harper, Murray Smith, Johnston, Wood, Peters, Anderson, Cross, Playfair, Seaward Carpenters and joiners, 450—Puntan, leader, assistants H W Nichols, Jas Hood, T G Harper Printers, 80—Mr R D Sykes, leader, assistants W P Plowman E Edwards, J Shackleton, E Trolley, T Armstrong Shop assistants, about 400—A A Gibson, J McIntosh, leaders, assistants H Pearson W H Kinsman, J Pardy, Dawson, S Adams, A Mummery, J Tyzack, Johns, J Rapson, Banfield, Etheridge, Austin Tailors and Saddlers, 70—J C Armitage, leader, assistants H Mulholland, B Bull, R Godfrey, E Manderson A Rose, J W Dent, C Doyse, Plasterers and Bricklayers, 200—Dr McKenzie, leader, assistants Horner, Keal, Brown, Jenkinson Pointsman a small section—J Dick, leader, assistants Gimber, Clackston, Poyson, Elliot, Parr General public, about 1,000—T Adams leader, assistants Franklin A F Garbutt, G W Young, Somers, P F Garbutt, Downard Native section 500—G Spradbrow and R C Vincent organized the natives, and kept them in order on Alexander Square, while the Demonstration was going on They told the natives they had appointed a dwarf native as their leader They were highly amused with this diminutive chap, who marched up and down in front of their ranks officering them, while they went through a number of exercises with their sticks, and danced and whooped This proved an excellent diversion to keep the natives out of trouble Later on Supdt Alexander appeared on horseback and moved them off the square

As the 'Courland' entered the bay all eyes were on the look-out to see what form the demonstration was taking A row of people, extending from the south end of the main wharf to some distance along the north pier, could be perceived, but they seemed to take matters very calmly The Indians on board did not seem much scared, and Mr Gandhi and a few others who were on deck looked on with an unperturbed expression The main body of the demonstrators, who had thronged the vessels at the main wharf, could not be seen from the incoming steamers The surprise experienced by those on the embankment when they saw the 'Courland' laid alongside the Bluff Channel moorings was seen by their actions They were seen to rush hither and thither, entirely at a loss how to proceed, and soon they all left to attend the meeting on Alexander Square This was the last that the vessels were to see of the much talked-of demonstration The passengers landed in small batches in ferry boats, about two hours after the crowd had dispersed As for Mr Gandhi, the Superintendent of Water Police was instructed by Mr Escombe to offer to land him and his family quietly at night that day Mr Gandhi accepted the offer with thanks Later on the same day Mr Laughton paid him

a friendly visit on board, and suggested that they should land together. The suggestion was accepted, and on his own responsibility, at his own risk, and without previously informing the Water Police, Mr. Gandhi landed near Addington with Mr. Laughton at about 5 o'clock. He was recognized by some boys, who followed him and his companion, and as they were proceeding along West Street, the main street of Durban, the crowd became large. Mr. Laughton was separated from him; Mr. Gandhi was kicked, whipped, stale fish and other missiles were thrown at him, which hurt his eye and cut his ear, and his hat was taken off his head. While this was going on, the wife of the Superintendent of Police, who happened to be passing by, bravely afforded protection with her umbrella, and the police, on hearing the yells and the cries, came to the rescue, and escorted him safely to an Indian house. But the crowd, which had by this time become very large, did not leave, and blockading the front of the house demanded 'Gandhi'. As darkness deepened the crowd continued to swell. The Superintendent of Police, fearing serious disturbance, and forcible entry into the house, had Mr. Gandhi removed to the Police Station, disguised as a police constable.

That the affair of this demonstration has filled sober Englishmen, even in Natal, with pain and shame, may be seen from the following letter which one of them—Mr. Laughton—deemed it his duty to write to *The Natal Mercury* on 16th January :

I observe in your leader in this morning's issue of the *Mercury*, you give it as your opinion that Mr. Gandhi was ill-advised in landing and coming through Durban on Wednesday last; and, as I was certainly a party to his coming ashore as he did, I shall feel obliged by your giving me an opportunity of answering your remark. Hitherto it has been useless to speak unless you were prepared to adopt the programme of the demonstration party and its particular mode of attaining its ends; but, now that the Committee is dissolved, and the minds of men are no longer being inflamed, I trust that my letter will receive calm and thoughtful consideration. Let me commence by saying that while the agitation was proceeding I obtained a copy of Mr. Gandhi's pamphlet published in India, and concerning which we received Reuter's cable some months ago, and I can assure your readers that Reuter not only misrepresented the pamphlet, but misrepresented it so much that, on reading the two, I cannot but come to the conclusion that the writer of the cable had not read the pamphlet. I can say further that there is nothing in the pamphlet which anyone could take exception to on the ground of untruthfulness. Anyone can obtain a copy and read it if he chooses. Let your readers do so and answer honestly: Is there anything in it untrue? Is there anything in it which a political opponent was not justified in saying in support of his cause? Unfortunately, the mind of the public was inflamed by Reuter's version of it, and throughout the recent disturbances there was not a man to point

he had chosen; that he should not sneak into Durban like a thief in the night, but that he should face the music like a man and like a political leader, and — give me leave to say — right nobly did he do it. I accompanied him simply as a member of the Bar, to testify by so doing, that Mr. Gandhi was an honourable member of an honourable profession, in order that I might raise my voice in protest against the way in which he had been treated, and in the hope that my presence might save him from insult. *Your readers have now the whole matter before them, and the reasons which induced Mr. Gandhi to land as he did.* He might have kept to the boat at Cato's Creek, when he saw the crowd collecting to receive him; he might have taken refuge in the police station but he did not. He said he was quite ready to face the men of Durban, and to trust them as Englishmen. Throughout the trying procession his manliness and pluck could not have been surpassed, and I can assure Natal that he is a man who must be treated as a man. Intimidation is out of the question, because if he knew the Town Hall was going to be thrown at him, I believe, from what I saw, that he would not quail. Now you have the tale impartially told, I hope. Durban has grossly insulted this man. I don't describe the scene; I prefer not. I say Durban, because Durban raised the storm, and is answerable for the result. We are all humiliated at the *treatment. Our traditions concerning fairplay appear to be in the dust.* Let us act like gentlemen, and, however much against the grain it may be, let us express regret handsomely and generously.

## INDIANS IN THE TRANSVAAL

*A public meeting convened by leading citizens of Bombay was held on Thursday, 9th September 1909 in the Town Hall Bombay to consider the question of the treatment of Indians in the Transvaal Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim being in the chair. The meeting had the following resolution before it for acceptance*

(a) That the citizens of Bombay, in Public Meeting assembled respectfully appeal once again to His Majesty's Ministers and the British Parliament to do all in their power, at this crucial moment in the history of South Africa to prevent the continued injustice and ill treatment of His Majesty's Indian subjects in the Transvaal, arising out of the combined operation of the Registration Act and the Immigration Restriction Act in that Colony, which violate the Sovereign's gracious pledge to place Indians on a legal equality with the other subjects of the British Crown, and which have produced a profound sense of wrong and universal indignation among all classes and creeds in India

(b) That, pending the satisfactory settlement of all questions affecting Indians in South Africa, this meeting respectfully requests the Government of India to take steps to stop all further recruitment of Indian labour for South Africa

### *Indian Position in Transvaal has Worsened*

- In proposing the above resolution Gokhale said You will see that the first part of this resolution is practically identical not only in substance but in its very wording with a resolution which was adopted in this very hall at the beginning of last year by a public meeting presided over by the Hon. the Aga Khan<sup>1</sup> Eighteen months have elapsed since then and the fact that we have to repeat the self same resolution again to-day shows that no relief has come in the interval and that the period has been one long night of tribulation and suffering to our brethren in the Transvaal Indeed, gentlemen the position today is far worse than it was when the last meeting was held The actual struggle then had been only a month old and it so happened that the very next day after the Bombay meeting a compromise was effected between Mr. Gandhi and General Smuts, seemingly full of promise of a peaceful settlement honourable to both sides Again out of a total Indian population of about 8 000 men in the Transvaal 7,500 were engaged in the struggle To-day the total Indian population in that Colony has dropped to less than 6 000, and though most of these are in deep sympathy with the struggle and are helping, financially and in other ways the brunt of the persecution is being borne by a brave band of about five hundred Indians led by the indomitable Gandhi, a man

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 311

of tremendous spiritual power, one who is made of the stuff of which great heroes and martyrs are made. Gentlemen, we have all been following this struggle with close interest and with deep indignation and pain, relieved only by our admiration for the heroic stand which our countrymen have made, but I think it will be useful to recall briefly on this occasion the principal facts. Under the old Boer Government of the Transvaal, a law was in existence which required all Asiatics who entered the Transvaal after 1880 to register themselves and to pay a registration fee of £3. There was no limit to the number that might so enter and the Indian population in the Transvaal before the war was estimated — and the estimate has been accepted by the Government — at 15,000 males, leaving women and children out of account.

*Indian Immigration, a Cause of the Boer War*

The Boer Government had also passed a law requiring Indian traders to trade in locations only, but that law was never rigorously enforced and in fact an attempt to enforce it strictly was alleged by both Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Lansdowne<sup>1</sup> as one of the causes that led to the war. In those days, the Indians resident in the Transvaal were not only regarded as entitled but were actually encouraged to turn to the Imperial Government for protection. Before the outbreak of hostilities most of the resident Indians left the Transvaal, carrying with them passes from the Boer Government permitting them to return after the close of the war. The war ended in 1902, resulting in the annexation of the Transvaal to the British Empire. It was however soon discovered that the substitution of the British Government for the Boer, so far from bringing any relief to the Indians, actually made their position far worse. In 1903 the agents of the British Government that had gone to war with the Boers for seeking to enforce the law about locations, sought to enforce that law in a far more stringent manner than the Boers had ever contemplated. The attempt failed on an appeal to the Supreme Court, but it gave the Indians a taste of what was in store for them under the new regime, and it naturally filled all right-minded men with indignation and disgust.

Then the cry was started that Indians were flooding the Colony and it was necessary to stop the influx. How dishonest and unscrupulous the cry was may be seen from the fact that the Indian population in the Transvaal since the war has at no time reached the number that was there before the war. I have already told you that the male population alone before the war was 15,000. In 1904 a regular census was taken when it was found that the entire Indian population, including women and children, was only 10,000. Again in 1906, a memorandum issued by the Registrar of Asiatics showed that up to then about 13,000 permits had altogether been issued and that the actual number of Indians in that Colony — men, women, and children all told — was not more than 10,000. In July, 1907 when the first stage of the passive resis-

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 151.

tance struggle began, it was estimated by the Indian leaders that there were about 9,000 Indians in the Colony

### *Real Object of White Colonists*

In December of that year, when the struggle reached an advanced stage it was estimated that the number was about 8,000. And today it is less than 6,000. The cry of unrestricted influx was, however, persistently and vigorously maintained by Boer and British alike and the Indians soon saw that the real object of the white Colonists was somehow to get rid of the Indian element altogether. Lord Milner,<sup>1</sup> who could not help seeing how badly the Indians were being treated, advised them to undergo voluntary registration, and take out fresh permits, though they already had registered themselves under the Boer Government and held its passes. The Indians did this, and Lord Milner thanked them for the manner in which they had met him in the matter. When Lord Selborne<sup>2</sup> succeeded Lord Milner as High Commissioner, he inquired into the charge of unrestricted and fraudulent influx, and publicly declared that the charge was unfounded. Still the cry continued that the Colony was being flooded by Indians, and ultimately the Government introduced into the Legislative Council in 1906 an Ordinance called the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, which provided for a fresh compulsory registration of all Asiatics entitled to be in the Colony, under very humiliating circumstances. The Asiatics protested strongly, vehemently against the Ordinance, but to no purpose, and the Ordinance was, with small modifications, passed by the Legislative Council. This was in reality the beginning of the Passive Resistance movement. The British Indians held a public meeting to appoint a deputation headed by Mr. Gandhi to proceed to England to induce the Imperial Government to withhold the Royal Assent to the Ordinance and at this meeting they passed their famous resolution that in the event of their prayer being rejected, they bound themselves solemnly not to submit to the tyrannous, degrading legislation. The deputation to England succeeded for the time, and the Royal Assent was withheld from the Ordinance. But at the same time a constitution conferring full self-government was granted to the Colony and the very first use which the Transvaal Parliament made of its legislative powers was to pass, in March 1907, an enactment called the Asiatic Law Amendment Act for the compulsory registration of Asiatics, which was no other than the Ordinance from which the Royal Assent had been withheld. This time, however, the law received the Royal Assent in spite of the protests of the Indian community. The regulations framed under it required the Indians to register themselves by the end of October, 1907, to give their finger prints and other details for purposes of identification and altogether subjected them to most galling humiliations.

<sup>1</sup> LORD MILNER (1854-1925) High Commissioner for South Africa (1897-1905)

<sup>2</sup> LORD SELBORNE (1859-1942) M.P. (1885-95) First Lord of the Admiralty (1900-05) High Commissioner for South Africa (1905-09) helped the British Government in securing the South Africa Act of 1909 through the Imperial Parliament

The Indians declined to submit to the regulations and though the period for registration was extended to the end of November, 1907, it was found at its close that only 500 Indians out of a total of 8,000 had registered themselves.

### *The Compromise*

Then followed a sharp but comparatively short conflict between the Transvaal Government and the passive resisters. Many of them including Mr. Gandhi were arrested and sent to jail, but at the end of January, 1908, a compromise was arrived at, as I have already told you, between Mr. Gandhi and General Smuts. The terms of this compromise, according to Mr. Gandhi's version, which those who know Mr. Gandhi will not for a moment doubt, were these : The Indians were to register themselves voluntarily within three months, the registration being free from humiliating details and the Asiatic Law Amendment Act was to be repealed and Asiatic immigration was to be regulated under the operation of another law passed the previous year, namely, the Immigration Restriction Act which was general in its provisions. In accordance with this compromise, the whole Indian community in the Transvaal voluntarily registered itself by the beginning of May, 1908; but the Transvaal Government, on its side, instead of repealing the obnoxious Asiatic Law Amendment Act, merely passed a law to validate the voluntary registrations. The result of this action on the part of the Transvaal Government was to defeat two most important objects which the Indians had in view in agreeing to the compromise. Those objects were : first, that there should be no law on the statute-book of the Colony subjecting Indians as such to humiliating treatment, and secondly, it should be open to the people of this country to enter the Colony on the same terms as the people of European countries, i.e. by passing a literacy test in one of the European languages, thereby ensuring immigration to a few cultured Indians every year. By retaining the Asiatic Law Amendment Act, however, on the statute-book, General Smuts frustrated both these objects, as the Act subjected Indians to humiliating treatment, and by confining entry into the Colony to those Asiatics only who were pre-war residents, it effectually prevented the admission of new Indians. The Indian community of the Transvaal naturally therefore looked upon the refusal of General Smuts to repeal the Asiatic Law Amendment Act as a gross breach of faith and finding themselves taken in, inasmuch as they had voluntarily registered themselves, they at once held a public meeting at which they renewed the vow to continue passive resistance, and to re-open the struggle about 2,500 Indians burnt their registration certificates.

### *Continued Passive Resistance*

This was in September of last year and since then the struggle has gone on in a very acute form. Those who will speak to the second resolution will tell you what dreadful hardships and suffering have been endured by the passive resisters for the cause. Briefly 2,500 sentences, mostly of hard labour, have

been inflicted on them. About a thousand persons have been absolutely ruined and a thousand more have left the Colony. The struggle, however, has continued unabated to the present day.

Gentlemen, I have so far given you briefly the principal facts of the struggle. The first thing we have got to realize in this matter is that Mr Gandhi and our other countrymen in the Transvaal are fighting not for themselves but for the honour and the future interests of our motherland. So far as they themselves were concerned, they had satisfied the requirements of the situation by registering themselves voluntarily. But the whole battle has raged round the repeal of the Asiatic Law Amendment Act and they have insisted on this repeal so that an invidious piece of legislation, insulting in its character to the people of this country, should be removed from the statute book of a British Colony. As a practical man Mr Gandhi is prepared to agree that there should be no unrestricted immigration of Indians into the Colony, that Government there should in its discretion be permitted to restrict such immigration in practice. But he wants them to effect this under the operation of the Immigration Restriction Act which is perfectly general in its application to all nationalities and which does not cast any reflection on any of His Majesty's subjects such as the Indian community.

### *Gandhi's Struggle and India's Future*

Then Mr Gandhi's struggle is in furtherance of the future interests of our motherland. For better or for worse this country is now included in the British Empire and our progress must be towards complete equality with our English and other fellow subjects in that Empire. Here again as practical men, we are prepared to recognize that the attainment of such equality and the obliteration of race distinctions which it involves can be but a slow affair. But we have a right to insist that the movement must be in the direction of a steady removal of these distinctions which are numerous in all conscience and not towards adding further to them. In fighting for the principle that no humiliating disabilities shall be imposed by the statute book of a British Colony on Indians as Indians, Mr Gandhi is fighting for the assertion of our claim to that equality with which our hopes for the future are bound up. Gentlemen, I have heard it said by some friends mainly Englishmen that though they originally sympathized with the Indians in this struggle Mr Gandhi's resort to passive resistance involving as it does, defiance of the laws of the Colony, has alienated their sympathies. Now I do not in the first place think that this is quite a fact. For we see the committee in England presided over by Lord Ampthill,<sup>1</sup> backing up the passive resisters as strongly and cordially as ever. Again even if a few Englishmen have grown cold in their sympathies, I am sure none of us here feels anything but the highest admiration for the manner in which this struggle has been carried on by our side. I think, and I say this deli-

<sup>1</sup> LORD AMPHILL (1869-1935), Governor of Madras (1900-1906)



berately, that in the circumstances of the Transvaal, passive resistance such as that organized by Mr. Gandhi, is not only legitimate, but is a duty resting on all self-respecting persons.

### *Gandhi a Great Moral Force*

What is this passive resistance ? Passive resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure is a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to suffer the penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly and clearly and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of a law and there is no other way to obtain redress, I think refusal to acquiesce in it, taking the consequences of such refusal is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material or immediate interests.

Look at the splendid manner in which the whole movement has been managed. Hindus, Mahomedans, Parsis, all held together as one man forgetting their usual differences and suffering with wonderful self-restraint — surely a man who can achieve this must represent a great moral force, and must not be lightly judged. Again look at the fact that though the struggle has gone on in an acute form all these months, not even the worst opponent of Mr. Gandhi has suggested the least suspicion about his loyalty or his general attitude towards the British Government. No, gentlemen, I am sure, we all think that Mr. Gandhi is perfectly justified in resorting to passive resistance when all other means of redress failed. I am sure, if any of us had been in the Transvaal during these days we should have been proud to range ourselves under Mr. Gandhi's banner and work with him and suffer with him in the cause.

### *Duty of Imperial Government*

Ladies and gentlemen, this resolution says that we again appeal to the Imperial Government and the Imperial Parliament to use their influence on our behalf at this crucial moment in the history of South Africa and thereby close this bitter question in a satisfactory manner. The present is an important moment because the four colonies of South Africa have just been united into a federation. Surely, we trust, it is not too much to hope that at such a moment the colonial authorities themselves must be anxious to wipe all unpleasant controversies, if possible, off the slate. It is often said, and it is no doubt largely true, that the Imperial Government, whatever its sympathies, cannot coerce self-governing colonies into particular courses of action.

But the Imperial Government owes a duty to other subjects besides the white residents of self-governing colonies and moreover even if there may be no coercion there are numerous ways of making private representations which may prove more or less effective. For instance, South Africa is sure to want something from the Imperial Government sooner or later. That would be an opportunity for the Imperial Government to bring pressure to bear upon the Union to secure justice to us. I fear the Imperial Government does not quite realize the bitter intensity with which the people of India feel and

resent the treatment meted out to their countrymen in the Transvaal. If they did this, I do think that some way would be found out of the present difficulty, satisfactory to both sides. After all it is only a modest demand which the Indians are making and it is difficult to believe that the Imperial Government can do nothing in the matter.

But, Gentlemen this resolution does not merely confine itself to an appeal to the Imperial Government. It also appeals to the Government of India whose sympathies with us in this matter are well known. The four colonies of South Africa are now united and they are jointly responsible for any further legislation in matters affecting Indians. Now from the Indian standpoint, Natal is the vulnerable point of the Union, and we call upon the Government of India to strike at this point, for if ever retaliation is justified, it is justified in this case. Natal needs Indian labour—it imported about 8,000 indentured Indian labourers in 1905, 11,600 in 1906, over 6,000 in 1907, and over 3,000 last year. The recruitment takes place in this country under the authority of the Government of India and by simply withdrawing this authority, the Government of India can stop this supply of Indian labour to Natal. The Government can very well say to South Africa, as Lord Curzon<sup>1</sup> said to the Transvaal five years ago, "You must treat free Indians throughout South Africa in a reasonable and satisfactory manner. Otherwise we will not help you any more with Indian labour." We respectfully call upon the Government of India to take up this attitude, not only for the sake of Indians in the Transvaal but also for the Indians in Natal itself. For it is well known that Natal treats Indians in that Colony disgracefully. The condition of our indentured labourers there is not far removed from that of slavery. Indian traders are harassed in numberless ways. There is no provision whatever for the education of the children of free Indians beyond the primary stage, and none even for the primary education of the children of indentured labourers. And there are several other grievances of a similar nature. Last year Natal tried to pass two laws, one withdrawing the Municipal franchise from the Indians which they at present enjoy and the other intended to eliminate the whole free Indian element from the Colony in the course of ten years. Fortunately both these laws were disallowed by the Imperial Government. Natal really deserves no consideration at our hands and I earnestly trust that the Government of India will show no such consideration.

### *Struggle for Equality in India*

One word more and I have done. The root of our present troubles in the colonies really lies in the fact that our status is not what it should be in our own country. Men who have no satisfactory status in their own land, cannot expect to have a satisfactory status elsewhere. Our struggle for equal treatment with Englishmen in the Empire must therefore be mainly carried on in

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 16

India itself. Then again we must remember that it is bound to be a long and really bitter struggle. It will require again and again scarifices and sufferings such as those of our Transvaal brethren and it will bring us repeated failures before we achieve final success. But suffering or no suffering, failure or success, we owe it to our motherland to carry on this struggle with stout hearts and full faith in the justice of our cause. And I for one have no doubt in my mind about the ultimate issue.

## PASSIVE RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

*The Indian National Congress which met at Lahore had before it on December 29 1909, the following resolution dealing with the Indian struggle in South Africa. The resolution ran*

This Congress expresses its great admiration of the intense patriotism, courage and self sacrifice of the Indians in the Transvaal—Mahomedan and Hindu, Zoroastrian and Christian, who are heroically suffering persecution in the interests of their country and are carrying on their peaceful and selfless struggle for elementary civil rights against heavy and overwhelming odds

This Congress offers its warmest encouragement to Mr M K Gandhi and his brave faithful associates and calls upon all Indians, of whatever race or creed, to help them unstintedly with funds, and, in this connection, the Congress begs to convey to Mr R J Tata<sup>1</sup> its high appreciation of the patriotic instincts which have inspired his munificent donation of Rs 25,000 to his suffering countrymen in South Africa in their hour of need and trial

This Congress begs earnestly to press upon the Government of India the necessity of prohibiting the recruitment of indentured Indian labour for any portion of the South African Union and of dealing with the authorities there in the same manner in which the latter deal with Indian interests, so long as they adhere to the selfish and one sided policy which they proclaim and practise, and persist in their present course of denying to His Majesty's Indian subjects their just rights as citizens of the Empire

This Congress protests against the declaration of responsible statesmen in favour of allowing the self governing colonies in the British Empire to monopolise vast undeveloped territories for exclusive white settlement, deems it its duty to point out that the policy of shutting the door in these territories and denying the rights of full British citizenship to all Asiatic subjects of the British Crown, while preaching and enforcing the opposite policy of the open door in Asia, is fraught with grave mischief to the Empire and is as unwise as it is unrighteous

*In moving the resolution, Gokhale spoke as follows*

The first article of our constitution says that the Congress seeks to secure

<sup>1</sup> SIR RATAN J TATA (1871-1918), well known industrialist, took great interest in the problem of Indians in South Africa and made a munificent donation of Rs 25 000 toward their passive resistance struggle there. Gokhale admiringly refers to him in his speech at the Lahore Congress in 1909 and that at the Bankipore Congress in 1912

for the people of this country, first, a system of administration in India itself similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire; and, secondly, a participation for our countrymen not only in the burdens and responsibilities of the Empire but also in its privileges on equal terms with those other members. You will thus see that there are two ideas represented by the aspirations of the efforts of this Congress. One has reference to our status. I mean our political status in our own country; and the second to our political status in the whole Empire. Yesterday's resolution about the reforms and some of the resolutions that will follow today all deal with the improvement of our political status in our own country. This resolution, that I have just now submitted to you, deals with our political status in the whole of the British Empire. On this account, in the first instance, this question is of great, of supreme, and outstanding importance. But apart from that there are special circumstances which invest this question today with very special importance. You are aware that for many years past Indians in South Africa have had a very difficult time and during the last two years a most acute struggle has been going on in the Transvaal between our countrymen there and the Government of that Colony; but I take it that most of you are familiar with the leading facts of this struggle and yet in commending this resolution for your acceptance I think it is necessary to glance briefly at those facts here.

### *Facts of the Struggle*

For the purpose of this review one may divide the whole period of the struggle into three parts : the period of the Boer Government; the period of the Crown Government; and the present period of self-government for the Transvaal. During the time of the Boer Government our position was not very satisfactory; but in any case emigration into the Colony was perfectly unrestricted; any Indian who chose to go there could go there ; all that was required of him was a payment of three pounds as registration fee. That is all. As a matter of fact, when the war broke out, there were in the Colony fifteen thousand Indians, that being the male population only, women and children being left out of account.

There was another circumstance in our favour in those days. The strong arm of the British Government was behind us in the struggle that our countrymen were making with the Boer oligarchy at the time. As a matter of fact, many of you remember that both Lord Lansdowne<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain mentioned the treatment that was sought to be meted out to the Indians in regard to the location laws as the main cause for which the Boer war was undertaken. That was the position under the Boer Government. There was the harsh and degrading law as regards locations, but that was never sought to be rigorously applied.

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 151.

Then came the war Then came the five or six years of Crown Government During this Crown Government, when any one would have thought that the honour of England was committed to the policy of improving the status of Indians, as far as the honour of a country can be said to be committed by its leading statesmen, our countrymen actually found that an attempt was made immediately to render that position worse than it was The very first thing which the Crown Government sought to do was to enforce that location law even more stringently than the Boer Government They failed in that for reasons which I need not go into here But our countrymen saw that for them the war had really made no change and as a matter of fact it had made their status worse After that for about three to four years both Briton and Boer in the Transvaal, whatever their differences, were of one mind in regard to the treatment of Indians Both Boer and Briton set up a cry of dishonest influx of Indians into the Colony It was a perfectly unjust accusation, it was a lying accusation, as was proved by several estimates published by the Government itself But the cry was kept up for about four or five years There was a census taken in 1904 when it was found that there were 10 000 Indians in the Colony as against 15,000 men under the Boer Government, these ten thousand included children and women There was another estimate published by the Registrar for the Asiatic Immigration in 1906 when again he found that there were 10,000 Indians in the Colony There were two further estimates, one putting the number at 9,000 and another at 8,000 You will thus see that the cry of dishonest influx of Indians into the Colony was an absolutely unjust cry

### *New Struggle*

This was the beginning of a new struggle The white colonists were determined to prevent our people from entering and to put out as many as possible Matters ultimately reached a crisis when an attempt was made to legislate in the matter, legislation being undertaken by the old Legislative Council that the Crown Government had given to the Colony In 1906 an Ordinance called the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance was introduced into the Legislative Council, the object of which was to confine entry into the Transvaal to pre-war residents and to compel all Indians in the Transvaal to register themselves with the great humiliation attending such registration All Indians naturally protested against this But in spite of their protest the Ordinance was passed and then the Indians took a step which lies at the commencement of the present struggle that is going on In September 1906 finding that all their efforts were unavailing and that this Ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council, they held a meeting to protest against what was done, and at that meeting they passed their famous resolution—which since then has been known as their Covenant—saying that if the Imperial Government gave their sanction to that legislation, they would not submit to it They appointed at that meeting a deputation to proceed to England and that deputation was headed by our great and illustrious countryman, Mr Gandhi

*Gandhi's Immortal Part*

Fellow-delegates, after the immortal part which Mr. Gandhi has played in this affair, I must say it will not be possible for any Indian, at any time, here or in any other assembly of Indians, to mention his name without deep emotion and pride. (Here the huge gathering rose to its feet and accorded three hearty and most enthusiastic cheers for Mr. Gandhi). Gentlemen, it is one of the privileges of my life that I know Mr. Gandhi intimately; and I can tell you that a purer, a nobler, a braver and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. Mr. Gandhi is one of those men, who, living an austere simple life themselves and devoted to all the highest principles of love to their fellow beings and to truth and justice, touch the eyes of their weaker brethren as with magic and give them a new vision. He is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot amongst patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high watermark. Mr. Gandhi headed this deputation which was sent to England and owing to his exertions and owing to the justice of our cause Royal assent was withheld to that Ordinance.

This, however, was followed by the grant of Self-Government to the Colony and the new Colonial Parliament came into existence in February or March of next year, 1907. The very first thing that this Parliament did, as soon as the members were sworn in, was to undertake the passing of this Asiatic legislation, Briton and Boer being united in that desire. They passed the same Ordinance in a new form. They passed it and called it the Asiatic Law Amendment Act, practically prescribing the very same conditions and provisions that were contained in the Ordinance, the object being two-fold, namely, to keep out of the Colony all Indians that may seek to enter there unless they were pre-war residents, and to compel resident Indians there to register themselves. This had to receive the Royal sanction; but this time, on the plea that it was a self-governing Colony which was legislating like that, the Imperial Government showed weakness and gave Royal sanction to this measure. The regulations that were framed under this law required the Indians to register under the most humiliating circumstances. They were to give a number of details which might well be resented by every self-respecting man. All the Indians were required to register themselves by the end of October 1907. Indians under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi immediately took steps to resist these regulations. They made up their minds that they would not register, no matter what the consequences were. The Government found itself face to face with the resistance of 8,000 men — that was the Indian population of the Colony at that time. They resorted to all manner of persuasion and coaxing; they extended the period from three to six months but it was found at the end of that period that only 500 men out of the 8,000 had registered themselves, the remaining 7,500 declining to register themselves. Then followed a short and sharp struggle. About this time two years ago, Mr. Gandhi and some other leading men were arrested and sent to jail. That however did not last long

because in January negotiations were opened by the Boer Government with Mr Gandhi and a compromise was arrived at. It was a compromise which at that time promised peaceful and honourable settlement to them. Roughly the terms of the compromise were three. They were not reduced to writing. The first thing was that this Asiatic Law Amendment Act was to be repealed—the whole of the struggle that has since gone on has raged round the repeal of the Asiatic Law. The first condition was that this Asiatic Law was to be repealed. That was quite understood. The second was that the Indians there were voluntarily to register themselves but the registration was to be free from humiliating conditions. The third was that whatever restrictions the Government wanted to be imposed, were to be imposed under the operation of another law which was perfectly general in its nature and not aimed at the Asiatics—the law named the Immigration Registration Act that applied to everybody. Mr Gandhi said that any restrictions that the Government wanted must be imposed under that Act. Acting on the good faith of that Government Mr Gandhi travelled through the country and persuaded his countrymen with the greatest difficulty, because you know an attempt was made on his life by some of his followers who were furious that he should have agreed to that compromise and that he had to be put in the hospital. He did his part as well as a man of honour could have done in those circumstances. In the course of three or four months, by May, the entire Indian population with very few exceptions had voluntarily registered themselves.

#### *General Smuts Broke Faith*

Having done his part of the compact, Mr Gandhi expected General Smuts and the Boer Government to do their part of the compact, to carry out the repeal of the Asiatic Law Amendment Act. There General Smuts broke faith and said that that was not so promised. Therefore there was nothing left for our countrymen but to continue the struggle or else to put up with this gross breach of faith. They had registered themselves and the purpose of the Act was quite satisfied. Therefore they took another bold step. A meeting was held of about 2,500 Indians at which they openly and publicly burnt their registration certificates. The value of the certificate is this. You are liable to be challenged by any policeman and liable to be called upon to produce the certificate. If you produce it you go unmolested, otherwise you are arrested and hauled up before a Magistrate. These men therefore voluntarily sacrificed the certificates which secured them against molestation and threw down an open challenge against the Boer Government and the Government accepted their challenge. There were arrests and imprisonments and by the time Mr Polak came to this country and Mr Gandhi went to England about 2,500 punishments had been suffered by our countrymen mostly with hard labour.

But the suffering endured by our countrymen was not represented by these mere sentences of imprisonment. Thousands had suffered in property. It has been estimated by Mr Gandhi that between half a crore and one crore in



property had been lost by that small handful of Indians there. About one thousand people had been rendered homeless; families had been scattered and had been made wanderers on the face of the earth. Enormous suffering has been endured by women and children of which it is difficult to form an adequate idea. Their husbands, brothers and sons having gone to jail, the women turned vegetable sellers in the streets to maintain themselves and their children somehow. All this time this handful of our countrymen, this small community has carried on the agitation, which is a standing lesson to the people of this country. For three years they have undergone this suffering, fighting with one hand and with the other hand pushing on their agitation ceaselessly in South Africa, in this country, and in England. Well, some time ago our brethren finding that the situation had grown extremely serious and finding also that the four Colonies of South Africa were to be united into a union, sent a deputation to England in order to get the Imperial Government to put pressure upon the Colonial Prime Ministers and this deputation was also headed by Mr. Gandhi. Through Mr. Gandhi's courtesy I was privileged to see the negotiations between himself and Lord Amphilh on one hand and Lord Morley<sup>1</sup> and Lord Crewe<sup>2</sup> on the other. Mr. Gandhi did all that was possible for a conciliatory man to do in the matter. But the negotiations failed for no fault of ours or of those who stand for us. Roughly, the case may be mentioned in one sentence. General Smuts declared to Lord Crewe that he was not prepared to admit even the theoretical equality of the Asiatics with the white people. The negotiations having failed, Mr. Gandhi has gone back to South Africa. Mr. Polak is here to rouse and enlist your sympathy. Gentlemen, it has come to that; he has had to come here in order to enlist your sympathies in this, because the struggle has been resumed. Only yesterday, Mr. Polak got a telegram saying that Mr. Gandhi and his second son and several others had gone across the frontier in order to be arrested and to challenge the Government still further. What will happen we have yet to see. I had a short telegram myself a few days ago in which Mr. Gandhi said he expected to be arrested very shortly and very probably in the course of the next two or three days he will be arrested. Now this is the struggle and the question before us is: what are we going to do to help our countrymen in this matter? The resolution that I have read out to you contains three appeals. I will deal with these three appeals in the inverse order.

### *Cause of Right and Justice*

Before doing that I should like to sum up the struggle very briefly. It is this. There are four facts that stand out prominently in connection with this struggle. First is that the condition of our countrymen has deteriorated steadily from the time of the Boer Government to the present time; gone from bad to worse. The second is that our cause is a cause of right and justice; our countrymen

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See foot-note on p. 391.

take their stand on that equality which is promised to us by our Sovereign and Parliament and they insist that that equality shall be a reality and not a hollow promise. The third is our countrymen have done really nothing unworthy throughout the struggle, on the contrary, they have done everything worthy, so worthy that our hearts must feel a glow of pride and all of us must feel high hopes about the future of our land. The last is that our countrymen are struggling not for themselves but for the honour of India. This is a point that has to be realized. They are not struggling for themselves at all. They had voluntarily registered themselves, they had secured themselves from molestation. But they burnt their certificates because they did not want the bar to be put upon the Indian that he is not equal to the Boer. They did not want this stigma on the Indian name. The struggle therefore is for the honour of India, is in the interests of those of us who may want to go there, and not for those who are there. It is therefore our struggle, more than the struggle of that small Colony there.

### *Appeal to Imperial Parliament*

This is the struggle and what are the appeals that we make in this resolution? We will take the appeals in the inverse order. The last is the appeal to the Imperial Parliament, the next one is the appeal to the Indian Government and the first appeal is to the people of this country. The appeal to the Imperial Parliament is this. We say this respectfully to the Members of the Imperial Parliament and Imperial statesmen that the policy that has been often announced by statesmen calling themselves Imperial, namely, that the white Colonies were for the white people only as also the undeveloped tracts suited to white people, that that is a policy selfish and unrighteous, that the people of India will never agree to that policy, that the policy is unrighteous because for better or for worse India now forms part of the Empire, in theory at any rate, we have been told that we are the subjects of England and fellow-subjects of the white subjects of the King. We know in practice that we are not the equal subjects of the King but the subjects of our fellow subjects, subjects of the white subjects. Surely we cannot accept this for ourselves. We say that if you understand the true interests of the Empire you must not allow this policy to go on. You must reverse and put an end to it as soon as you can. That is our appeal to the Imperial Government.

### *Indian Government asked to Retaliate*

Our appeal to the Indian Government is this. You are the Government of this country, you are no agents for the Transvaal or for the South African Union. You have to keep the interests of the people of this country foremost in your mind. I am glad to say it is also the view which the Government of India take in the matter. We say to them that the time has come not merely for making representations, that time is gone. They have made endless representations but so far they have produced no effect. The time has come for

retaliation. Happily for us the means for retaliation are in the hands of the Government of India. Natal wants Indian labour. During the last four years the figures available for them show that in 1905, 8,000 Indians were taken there as indentured labourers. In the next year about 7,000, in the third year about 6,000 and in the last year they took 3,000 Indians as labourers. They want indentured labour; they do not want any free Indians there. The Government of India have got to say that they have either to stand the free Indian or do without the indentured labour. This is the position about which there is no mincing words any more. The new Councils give opportunities to our members to bring these questions in the form of motions before the Imperial Council at any rate; and I trust that those who will be in the first Council will realize their duty in the matter and lose no time in bringing forward a motion. We say to the Government : you must discontinue this recruitment of indentured labour. It is carried on under the authority of the Government; therefore they have it in their power not merely to withdraw but to stop that recruitment. It has been said by a Commission, that was recently appointed to consider the question of emigration, that without this labour many industries of Natal will be paralysed. The Commission enumerates the industries that will be so paralysed. Therefore the Government of India can well say to Natal and the South African Union that unless the condition of Indians is improved, indentured labour will no more be available to South Africa from India. That is our appeal to the Government of India.

### *Appeal for Funds*

Our appeal to our own countrymen is this : a small Colony in Transvaal is doing its duty in the matter. It has done nothing unworthy but everything worthy. It is engaged in what is known as the passive resistance struggle. What is the passive resistance struggle? It is essentially defensive in its nature and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons. A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul force against brute force; he pits the divine in man against the brute in man; he pits suffering against oppression, pits conscience against might; he pits faith against injustice; *right against wrong*. A passive resister deliberately and openly violates the requirements of an unjust law or order for the simple reason that he cannot conscientiously submit to that law or order. He does not seek to evade the consequences of that but invites them and he glories in them. It is a spiritual struggle essentially in keeping with the highest traditions of Indian spirituality. I repeat that our countrymen have done nothing unworthy. On the contrary, everything that they have done is worthy of them. It rests with us now to say whether we shall go to their rescue or not, because this small community is, I have been told, vanishing. Their loss is from half a crore to one crore already. You can well imagine what that means. They need funds; they are prepared to carry on the struggle, whether your funds go or not. Men who are going to jail again and again leave their children behind thinking that God will take

care of them, if no help goes probably the women and children will perish, if it goes all may yet be well with the struggle. It is our duty to send help. In any case we must support this struggle till the South African Parliament meets in July.

There is some probability of some pressure being put upon the new Parliament when it meets. We must carry on the struggle till then. I do not say it will be given up then. It will depend upon the terms offered by the new Parliament. If they are honourable Mr. Gandhi is not the man to stand in the way of a solution, if they are not, no matter how acute it may be, Mr. Gandhi is not a man to give up the struggle. In any case we are bound to find money for the struggle. We shall be ashamed before the whole of the civilized world if we do not rise to the responsibility. At least a lakh of rupees must be forthcoming by April. Mr. Tata whose name is mentioned in this resolution, a worthy son of a worthy father, has shed fresh lustre on the great and illustrious name he bears. He has already placed Rs. 25,000 at the disposal of the Colony. In addition to that the country must raise Rs. 1,00,000. I had a talk with Mr. Polak and we thought that if Bombay raised Rs. 25,000 in addition to Mr. Tata's subscription and Bengal with its population four times as large as Madras and the United Provinces raised another Rs. 25,000, Madras and the United Provinces raised each Rs. 15,000 and the Punjab and Berar raised each Rs. 10,000 a lakh of rupees will be forthcoming. What is a lakh of rupees compared to the sufferings that they have cheerfully borne for the sake of our country and of our honour?

The appeal that I would address to you is this. It is your duty to come to the assistance of these people. As you do in this trial—you are on your trial, the whole of our nation in this matter is on its trial, our patriotism, public spirit and our sincerity are all of them on their trial before God and man in this matter—as you acquit yourself in this trial so shall it be with your country. If you fail we shall have to hang down our heads in shame and silence till another generation takes our place and renders more faithful service to our motherland. If you, on the other hand, acquit yourself well, if you rise to the height of your duty and responsibility then the struggle will be prolonged and all may yet be well with us. We may have to wade through failures and sufferings and difficulties. Spade work may have to be faced still, ultimately it shall be well with us and our countrymen.

## THE JOHANNESBURG BANQUET

*The British Indian Association, Johannesburg, arranged a banquet in Gokhale's honour on October 31, 1912 in the Masonic Hall there. The Mayor of Johannesburg was in the chair. Five hundred covers were laid. And the gathering included a fair sprinkling of Europeans — the first time they attended a mixed gathering.*

### *Rising to Respond to the Toast*

Rising to respond to the toast, Gokhale said that he used no merely conventional language, when he said that it was not easy for him to express in an adequate or suitable manner his thanks to that large and distinguished gathering for the great, the signal, honour they had done him that evening. That banquet, attended so well not only by members of his own community resident in Johannesburg, but also by so large a number of European ladies and gentlemen, many of them occupying prominent positions in public life, in business, in the professions, in fields of humanitarian endeavour, was, to his mind, in some respects, the culminating point of the series of receptions and entertainments at which it had been his privilege to be present since his arrival in South Africa. He did not mind confessing that, when he decided, some months previously, to visit South Africa that year, on his present mission, he had no expectation that he would have personally such an extremely pleasant time while there or that he would be enabled to carry with him to India, as now he should carry with him, the happiest recollections of his visit. He might even say that the possibility of his having to go through some of those experiences which usually fell to the lot of his countrymen in the sub-continent was not wholly absent from his mind, and he had almost prepared himself for being called upon at the Cape to satisfy the Immigration Officer that he was able to write a passage in English to his dictation correctly or for experiencing special difficulties in railway travelling, or for being asked to take out a special permit before entering the Transvaal. So far, however, from any of those things happening, there he was travelling in the utmost possible comfort, in a special coach which the Union Government had generously placed at his disposal, and on every side he was receiving nothing but the greatest kindness; and the European community of South Africa, so far from leaving him severely alone, had given him a welcome which was not only courteous but which had the added touch of that indefinable something which converted a merely formal courtesy into really cordial kindness. For all that, he did not know how to express his acknowledgments adequately, but he would say this, that whether his mission succeeded or failed, the feelings of lively satisfaction and gratitude with which the treatment accorded to him had filled him would always remain with him.

*Bird's-Eye View of the Situation*

He had said more than once, since his arrival, that his object in coming there was to acquire a firsthand knowledge of the Indian problem in the sub-continent and to be of help, if possible, in finding a solution of the difficulty which undoubtedly was serious and complicated. He had been there for ten days, and short as the time had been, he had had opportunities during that time—it had been his good fortune during that time—to meet several prominent men representing many varied interests and nearly every shade of opinion. Those conversations, with such study as he had been able to give to the question before coming there, had enabled him to form a fairly accurate idea of the situation, and though he would not give his final views on the position until he had completed his tour, because in all fairness he was bound not to formulate his views until he had concluded his tour, he thought that at an important gathering like that, he might indicate in a general manner the lines on which a solution might be sought and a settlement endeavoured to be brought about. He thought that, before they could exactly appreciate how the main difficulties of the problem might be approached it would be best to take a bird's eye view of the situation, because they were all apt to concentrate their attention on a particular aspect of the situation in accordance with their own interests, and therefore a general bird's eye view was often a useful preliminary to a discussion.

*European Fears of Being Swamped*

What was the situation in South Africa? He was trying to study it, so far as possible, from every standpoint and, if he might say so, with sympathy for every standpoint. There they had, in the first place, the European community, small in numbers, which had established itself in that vast country in the midst of a very large indigenous population, which was alien to it in race, and on an entirely different plane of civilization, and this had already given rise to problems social, political, economic and moral, which filled the more thoughtful men of the community with serious concern for its future. This situation appeared to be already difficult enough, and then they found that members of a third race, also alien to them, whatever their relations might be in another part of the Empire, were coming in, making their home and establishing themselves there in South Africa. They found that the numbers of this third race were comparatively small but they feared that there was a steady influx going on and they feared that in course of time they might be swamped by that third race and that their special civilization, their traditions, and the character of the institutions under which they lived, under which they had been brought up, would be seriously affected, more or less, by that influx, in addition to any effect that might be produced by the vast indigenous population that already existed in the sub-continent. Further, there was undoubtedly the colour prejudice, which was very strong

—and he was surprised to find how strong it was. And finally, there was the question of the economic interests of a certain section of the community, which found itself exposed to serious competition on account of the influx of this third community. He hoped that he had set out the European position as fairly as it was possible for him to do.

### *The Indian Side*

Next he would ask them to look at the Indian side. He would ask them to enter into the Indian feeling as he had endeavoured to enter into the European feeling. The Indian population of the sub-continent was numerically very small, smaller than one-ninth of the European population. He understood that the total Indian population of the sub-continent was about 1,50,000. Out of that number, nearly 1,20,000 were either ex-indentured people or their descendants, or persons serving under the system of indenture at that moment in Natal. Now he wanted them to realize that the bulk of that population consisted of men who had been brought into the country by the British Government, in the interests of a section of the white population of that country. He wanted them further to realize that the remaining 30,000 had merely come in the wake of those indentured men.

### *Initial Welcome Replaced by Harshness*

He had had occasion in March of that year, in connection with a debate in their Legislative Council, to read the despatches that passed between the Government of India and the Government of England when indentured labour was introduced in Natal in 1860. In those despatches, the Imperial Government had made the most solemn promises to the Government of India that the people who were to be brought over to Natal would be treated with every possible consideration during the term of indenture, and that after their indenture they would be allowed to settle in the land, and would have every facility given them that they might prosper in the country. The Imperial Government had held this tempting offer forth to the Indian Government in order to induce that Government to agree to the system of indenture; and for the first few years, at any rate, the whole attitude of the European community in Natal towards the indentured men was totally different to what it had been in recent years. The fear in those days was not that the Indian would stay in the country after he became free, but that he might go back after completing his indenture, and therefore every conceivable inducement was placed in his way that he might remain in the Colony afterwards and not go back to India. That was capable of the clearest possible demonstration.

A change, however, gradually took place in the attitude of the European population towards the eighties. And now they had gone so far as to impose a preposterous tax of £3 per year on every man, woman or child — girls above

13 and boys above 16—if they continued to reside in the Colony after having completed their indentures. He was not going into the merits of the question, he only mentioned what a complete change of attitude there was in the matter, but, whatever the change of attitude, one fact remained clear—that the Indian had not come to the sub continent of his own accord, that he had been brought there for the benefit of a section of the European population in the sub continent, that the free man had come in the wake of the indentured man, and that the bulk of the Indian population consisted of ex indentured men or their descendants, or men still serving under indenture. If they would look at it from that standpoint, he believed they would be able to understand better than otherwise the feeling of Indians in India in that matter. Here were their countrymen induced to emigrate for the benefit of the European population there—it was admitted that Natal was largely made by Indian labour, and now they read stories, some of which might be exaggerated, though there must be something in many of them, which appeared to them to be stories of grievous oppression and injustice. They saw that their countrymen had to live here under harsh laws and were subjected to an administration of those harsh laws which was even harsher than the laws themselves, and they could not understand why they were so treated. The people of India did not realize all the intricacies of the problem, and naturally there was a feeling of intense indignation there about what they read. That was the other side of the picture.

#### *Need for a Practical Solution*

Behind the Indians in South Africa stood India, with an ancient people who were not ashamed of their contribution to the world's civilization and progress, and who felt that, now that they were in the Empire, they should have opportunities of steady advancement under the flag of England. And behind all—behind the European community, behind the Indians—was the Empire, with the British flag floating over it, promising justice and equal opportunities for prosperity to the various members living under it. That briefly was the position. Again he hoped that he had stated it without undue emphasis and without exaggeration. Now how was a situation of that character to be dealt with? Unfortunately, the statesman's task was not like writing on a clean slate. He never could deal with problems as though nothing had gone before. Almost invariably, in practical affairs, one found that one had to take over the writing of those that had gone before, and by erasing a little in one place, adding a little in another, and altering a little elsewhere, to make it suffice for the needs of the present. That was the only way in which practical problems could be dealt with in any country. That was the essence of practical politics. The politician had undoubtedly to base himself on justice, he had need to be inspired by high purpose and he had to take note of what would reconcile conflicting interests. And then he had to deal with facts as he found them. That was the spirit in which the question had to be approached by all parties if a solution was to be found. The facts were there—the 150,000 Indians, on



the one hand, asking for just treatment; on the other, the European community with all its prejudices and with all the interests which it felt to be at stake. Taking the facts as they were, what was the way in which way might be found out of the difficulty, that a solution might be arrived at reasonably satisfactory to all parties concerned?

*Reasonable Assurance to Europeans*

In proceeding to consider the question in a spirit of compromise, the first point to note was that if the compromise was proposed of a character which would cause sore or bitter feelings on one side or the other, it had no chance of being accepted, or, if it was forced, that it would not last. What, then, were the elements of possible bitterness, possible soreness, to be removed before a solution could be proposed, which might reasonably be expected to be accepted by both sides? Taking a broad view of the case, it might be said that the European objection to the Indians was a double one. First of all there was the objection based on the fear of being swamped. The second was the fear that the political and other institutions under which they lived might be affected in course of time by the influx of Indians. There was also the grievance of a section of the European community in regard to trade competition, but that stood on a different footing from the other objections, for, as against it, there was the point of view of the consumer who was not interested in preventing that competition, but wished to buy wherever he could buy cheapest. The first two objections, however, were serious, fundamental, in any consideration of the present situation, and he saw the necessity of giving a reasonable assurance to the European mind that no room would be left for fear on either of those two scores, if a reasonable solution were to be arrived at. He could understand that, unless the Europeans in South Africa were enabled to feel secure that a continual influx of Indians into the sub-continent would not be going on, unless they were enabled to feel that their predominance in that land would not be affected, it would not be possible to reach a solution of the problem which would be really acceptable to the European community. What form actually the assurance should take was naturally a question for discussion, negotiation and adjustment. But the European mind must be set at rest on those points before they could hope to arrive at a solution which would remove the more irritating grievances of the Indian community. When the European community saw that there was no room for any more fears on these two heads, he hoped that they would realize that the Indians who were there were subjects of South Africa, and that the Government of that country must be solicitous for their welfare as it was for that of its other subjects. And the European community must then accept the view that except as regards the points he had mentioned, Indians must live under equal laws with themselves, and that the administration of those laws must be just and humane. If the question were approached in that manner—the necessary assurance being forthcoming to allay the reasonable fears

of the Europeans and the Indians who were there being assured that they would be treated justly and humanely in all other matters—he thought that a solution of the question should not be very difficult to reach. Of course a solution even on those lines might not be generally acceptable, but the moderate men on both sides should join hands, combine and insist that some such solution should be adopted in the interests of both sides. The extreme men on the Indian side might not matter just now, because they had no voice in the government of South Africa, though they might cause trouble in India.

*Extreme European View Unacceptable*

But the extreme men on the European side might not perhaps care to have a solution even on those lines—he was only hinting at the possibility, and that was more for them to consider than for himself, but it was possible that a section at any rate of the European community might further insist on the third grievance based on trade jealousy and economic competition being also settled in their favour with the other two points before agreeing to a compromise. Here, however, it was impossible for the Indian community to concede anything substantial. That was a matter of justice, pure and simple, to the Indians here, and it did not concern the Europeans as a whole, but only a section of them. If, however, it was sought to prevent the small Indian trader from competing permanently on reasonable terms with the European trader, by thrusting him into locations, harassing him, and ultimately sending him out of the country, he did not think a settlement was possible. He was aware that there were those who said that though that Empire included within its fold many races and peoples, yet it was in reality only a white man's Empire. Europeans undoubtedly occupied a dominant position, but, could it, therefore, be said that Indians and other races should be only hewers of wood and drawers of water in the Empire? He was not there to argue the question, but he invited those who thought like that to visit India, to see what it was like, and then come back and repeat such an opinion, if they could. He would not discuss that view any further. But he would be frank and tell them that on those terms England would find it difficult to hold India, and those who cared for the greatness and prosperity of the Empire—and it was not only Englishmen who so cared, but they in India also cared, because they knew that they had opportunities for progress in that Empire which they would not otherwise have—would see the necessity of not encouraging the belief that the Empire belonged to the European races only. If unfortunately it was found that the lines on which he had suggested a compromise were not possible owing to strong and violent opposition on the part of a section of the European community there, the struggle he feared, would have to go on, it was necessarily bound to go on. But he felt sure that there was a steadily increasing section of the European community itself who would not have that kind of thing. They would not allow any injustice which amounted to an intolerable oppression, such as a harsh administration of existing laws, to go on for long. And so,

leaving the Indians aside, if he understood the English character properly, he felt that the conscience of their own people would insist on a remedy being found, which would be in greater accord with their sense of justice. He knew that that was so, and it was that side of the English character that had enabled England to hold India for all those years, which had linked up the destinies of those two countries. And so it appeared to him that, after the other difficulties had been solved, if the harsh anti-Indian laws were not repealed in due time—not in a day, that was not possible—if they were not repealed in due course, and if their administration was not made more humane than it was, the better section of the European community in South Africa itself would not stand it for long; if, however, they unfortunately stood it—because it was often in the nature of such environments to undermine character—troubles and complications were sure to arise in India, which would undoubtedly cause serious embarrassment to the Empire, which had been on the whole a beneficent instrument of progress to all.

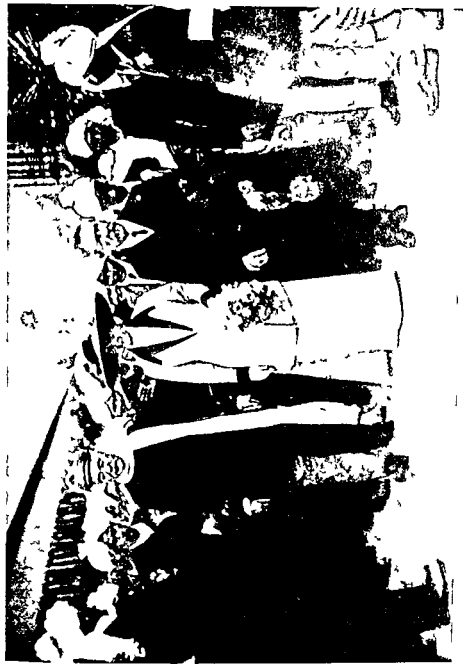
#### *European Committee Thanked*

That was his view of the question, and he had ventured to lay it before them frankly. And in that connection he would like to tender the thanks of the people of India to the European Committee constituted during the acute stages of the struggle to help the passive resisters. He thought that, next to the courage and heroism shown by the passive resisters themselves, the brightest spot in the struggle was the constitution of that Committee and the unselfish work that it did to help the Indian side. The people of India felt grateful to the Committee, and he would like to tender on their behalf his very best thanks to the Committee and to its worthy and able Chairman, Mr. Hosken, who had not shrunk from personal sacrifice in the interests of the cause which he had espoused.

#### *India behind South African Indians*

Before concluding, he would like to say a few words to the Indian section of that gathering. His Indian brothers and sisters in this sub-continent had taken and were taking infinite trouble to make his visit a success, and he really did not know how to thank them. Even at that banquet he understood that not only the general arrangements but even the cooking and waiting—everything—had been done by volunteers. It had been purely a labour of love. He could only thank them sincerely for all their trouble. He earnestly hoped with Mr. Duncan<sup>1</sup> that the chapter in the Transvaal history, which would always have to be recalled with pain and humiliation—pain certainly for both sides, humiliation—well, he would not speak about that—that that chapter had been definitely closed. He hoped that the more serious grievances under which they laboured would soon be redressed, but whether they were redressed sooner

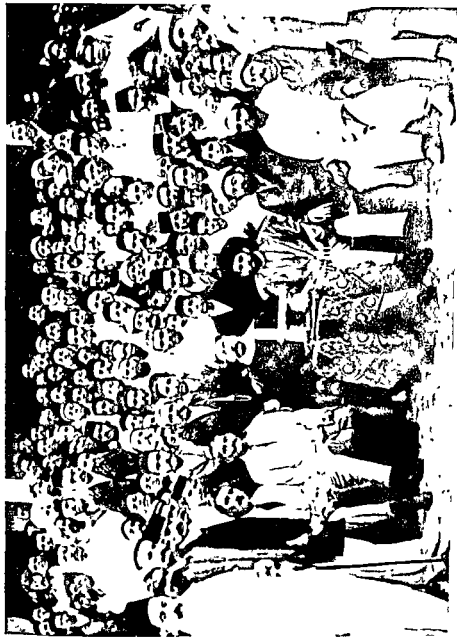
<sup>1</sup> A South African 'M.L.A.



Gokhale leaving Park Station with the Mayoress and Mayor of Johannesburg



Gokhale with the Cape Town Reception Committee. Gandhi, Dr. Abdurahman and Dr. Gool are in the group.



The Durban Reception Committee. The group includes Gandhi (to Gokhale's right) Mr. Jhaveri, Chairman, Reception Committee, and Mr. Loughton, K C



Gokhale with the Cape Town Reception Committee. Gandhi, Dr. Abdurrahman and Dr. Gool are in the group.

or later, they would have to depend in the future, as in the past, largely upon themselves. As he had said at the station on the occasion of the great welcome they had given him, India, who had been remiss in the past in helping them, would on all future occasions be behind them. Her heart had been stirred, and she would not forget again her children across the seas. But, when all was said and done, the brunt of the struggle would have to be borne by them in South Africa. And judging by the splendid spectacle they had presented in the course of the last struggle, he could not but feel confident that if ever another struggle came, they would again acquit themselves worthily and in a manner of which India would have no reason to feel ashamed. India felt the greatest admiration for the passive resisters who had borne so much for the honour of her name. He would not mention names because where so many had done well, it was impossible to mention all, and it was invidious to mention only a few.



my concern, however, is more with the present & the future than with the past, & here I report that unless the old faith of the educated classes, with the character & ideals of British rule is brought back, England with find on her hands before long another Ireland - and many times bigger - in India. The younger generations are growing up with of what may be called just bitterness & the situation must be as she believe in the peaceful progress of the country under British rule with anxious apprehensions. If India is to obtain self-government within the Empire - an

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### *Tribute to Gandhi*

But one name stood apart from the rest, the name of the figure which had been foremost in the struggle, the figure of his friend, of their friend, of the friend of everyone in that room—Mr. Gandhi. India recognized in Mr. Gandhi a great and illustrious son of whom she was proud beyond words, and he was sure that men of all races and creeds would recognize in him one of the most remarkable personalities of their time, but it was only those who had the privilege of knowing him intimately that knew how the pure and indomitable spirit that dwelt in that frail looking frame, that glorified whatever it touched, would break but never bend in a just or righteous cause. He was happy to find that that appreciation of Mr. Gandhi was not confined to the Indian community only, for during his tour nothing had warmed his heart more than to see the great, the universal esteem in which his friend was held by the European community on all sides. Wherever they had been, he had seen members of the European community eagerly surrounding him to shake hands with him, making it quite clear that though they had fought him hard in the past and might fight him again in the future, they honoured him as a man. That appreciation of Mr. Gandhi among Europeans was a most valuable asset to the Indians in any future struggle they might have to wage. They thus had self reliance and they had a great leader, but above all they had a just cause and that meant a great deal, for the words of the poet were as true to day as they had ever been. "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just."

God grant that the occasion might never arise for them to engage in a fresh struggle but if it did arise, he knew they would not shrink from the conflict. It might be that their difficulties would not be removed soon. It was sometimes found that with all the desire in the world for a settlement of differences of both sides, those who realized what was best were not able to adopt that best in practical affairs, and he was inclined even to fear that, with every wish to promote a solution the Ministers themselves might find it difficult to carry

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it through against those who might be opposed to their policy. He most earnestly hoped that that would not happen, but, if it did happen he hoped also that it would not discourage them. Mr. Duncan had asked him not to feel discouraged. He had been now for some years in public life and he knew that the man who would be discouraged at the first rebuff had no business to be in public affairs. He could assure him, therefore, that, whatever happened, he would not be discouraged, but it was a question not of his being discouraged or otherwise, but of *his countrymen not being discouraged*. And he would ask his countrymen to remember that, after all, the true moral interest of those struggles lay not so much in achievement as in the effort, for such effort in itself added to the permanent strength of the individual and the community, whether it succeeded or failed in its immediate purpose. A great teacher had said that it was not so much what they had in life as what they *were* that mattered. He wished that every one of the Indians there would always keep that in mind. If success awaited them it was well; but if they must fail when they had done their best, even then it was well, because it was always well to have endeavoured. In conclusion, he would again thank them all for the manner in which they had received him. He feared he had trespassed a little too long on their patience and the indulgence with which they had listened to him only added to his feeling of gratitude.

## INDIAN RECEPTION AT PRETORIA

### *Gokhale's Farewell Speech*

*A reception was organized in Gokhale's honour by the Indian community of Pretoria in the Town Hall there on November 14, 1912. In the unavoidable absence of the Mayor, Mr J H L Findlay, the Deputy Mayor, presided. In reply to the speeches of welcome, Gokhale made the following speech.*

### *Sense of Relief and Gratitude*

I feel, I need hardly assure you, greatly honoured by the presence of you all here this evening, and I beg leave to tender at the outset my grateful and sincere thanks to you for your kindness. This is my last public utterance in South Africa, and while my thoughts are necessarily tinged with a certain degree of regret at the prospect of so soon leaving the country where I have received so much kindness and spent such a pleasant time, I cannot disguise from you the fact that I contemplate the approaching termination of my tour with a great sense of relief. Ladies and gentlemen, I doubt if many people in South Africa realized how difficult was the position in which I found myself when I arrived at Cape Town last month. I had come to this country with the avowed object of studying at firsthand an admittedly difficult and delicate problem which has two sides to it, and which has aroused no small feeling on both sides. And, yet, I was compelled by the exigencies of the situation, to speak publicly on matters connected more or less with the problem from the day of my arrival. But the apprehension was never absent from my mind that if, by chance, owing to any over enthusiastic act on the part of my countrymen, who greeted me everywhere in kindly demonstrations, or owing to some thoughtless act or word of my own, an unfortunate impression was created or any feelings were inflamed which it was my earnest desire to allay and not to aggravate, I should really be injuring the cause which I had come here to serve. All through my tour I have been weighed down with this thought, and now that my visit is drawing to its close, I feel a great sense of relief and I thank God that no untoward incident has happened to mar the smooth progress of events. And judging from newspaper comments, as also from private conversations, I am emboldened to hope that, even if no actual good has resulted from my visit, it has, at any rate, done no harm. Ladies and gentlemen, on this, the last occasion, when I speak to the people of this country, I would like once again to tender my warm and heartfelt thanks to all who have been so kind to me. To my own countrymen, resident in South Africa, who have lavished such a wealth of affection on me wherever I have been. I have no words in which to express my gratitude and I would only say that it is my fervent prayer that, in any difficulties they may have to face in the future, I may be

privileged to be of some little assistance to them. To the members of the European community who have gone out of their way to show such great kindness to me, I tender my warmest thanks, and I tender them from the bottom of my heart. I will not abuse their generosity by interpreting it as indicating necessarily any approval of, or even sympathy with, my mission, and that only adds to the sense of obligation under which I lie to them.

Finally, I would like to repeat my respectful acknowledgments to the Union Government for the great courtesy and consideration with which they have treated me and for the generous hospitality which they have extended to me. Their attitude towards me has largely facilitated my work, and it has enabled me to meet many men of distinction in this land whom otherwise it might not have been easy for me to meet. This morning, three Ministers—General Botha, General Smuts, and Mr. Fischer—did me the honour to grant me an interview, in the course of which I had an opportunity to discuss the whole Indian problem in the sub-continent with them. We had a full, frank, and free interchange of views. I hope the Ministers saw clearly that there was no disposition on the Indian side to underrate the difficulties of their position. On the other hand, I would like to take this opportunity to express publicly my deep appreciation of the manner in which they approached the question and the sincere desire they evinced to arrive at a just and reasonable settlement. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I think I may say a word or two on the question itself, before I close.

#### *Plea for Just and Equitable Treatment for Indians*

There is no doubt that there is a great deal of feeling on the question on both sides, and this makes a dispassionate examination of the matter even more difficult than it would otherwise be. I have said, and I say it again, that, in the conclusions at which I have arrived, I have tried to keep in view the fact that the interests of both sides must, in some way or other, be reconciled. The fundamental question is how there shall be secured just and equitable treatment for those Indians who are here now, and their number is about 150,000. Whilst here, I have heard it urged that a settlement may be found by sending these people back to India. It may be a solution of one aspect of the problem, but, assuming that it is a desirable solution, which, I think, it is not, it is, for financial and other reasons, absolutely impracticable. These 150,000 people are here, they cannot be repatriated, they must therefore remain here and they must become, more and more, an integral and a permanent part of the general population of this sub-continent.

The most important question, then, is to what just and equitable treatment these people are entitled, and how such treatment may best be secured. Now one thing is quite clear, that, if a solution of this problem is to have any permanence and finality, it has to be such as will be acceptable to the European community, who are, after all, the dominant people of this country. And so long as there exists in the European mind the fear of a continued influx of

cerely trust that with the removal of the fear of a continued influx of Indians into this country, the Immigration Law will be administered in a far more considerate and sympathetic spirit, and all the present soreness of feeling of the Indian community in regard to it, and all sense of insecurity produced by it will be removed.

### *Trading Licences*

Next there is the question of trading licences. This appears to be in some respects the most difficult problem of all. The Europeans feel that they are gradually being crowded out by the Indians, that the Indians undersell them, and that important branches of trade are likely to fall entirely into Indian hands. That is the European viewpoint. On the other hand, the Indians feel that their freedom is being unjustly interfered with, that all outlets are being steadily closed to them, and that gross injustice is being done to them. Now while I do not seek to minimize in any degree the argument on the European side, I must frankly say that I have always felt that the traders who are injured, if at all, by the competition of the Indians are a very small part of the community, and that, if the argument be that the Indians sell cheaper, it must surely be to the general advantage of the community, whose interest it is to buy cheaper. But that apart, what reason can be given for the refusal to transfer a trading licence from one man to another or to allow him to take his own son into partnership, as was the case only a day or two ago in Ladysmith? This is certainly neither fair nor equitable treatment, and anyone can see that its sole object is to extinguish Indian trade, as opportunities arise. This is absolutely unjustifiable. Moreover, what is to be the fate of those who are born here under this policy? The matter of the control of trading licences in at least two Provinces of the Union is in the hands of the local authorities, and there is no right of appeal except as to renewal of licences in Natal, or on grounds of procedure, to a judicial tribunal, so that flagrant injustices are constantly perpetrated and go unremedied. That right of appeal against the interested decisions of their trade-competitors must be given to Indians if anything like justice is to be done to them. I quite recognize that direct interference by the Government is impracticable, with the law as it stands, but the restraining influence of the Government may be exerted in many directions, and I earnestly trust that it will be used to bring about a feeling of security in the mind of the Indian trader and remove a grievous sense of injustice and wrong.

### *Provision for Indian Education*

The question of the education of Indian children born in South Africa is also one about which the community has a great grievance at the present time. Very little provision for that education is made, and yet these children, when they grow up, must be absorbed into the general population to whose material and moral well-being they will be expected to contribute. Provision should therefore be made, not only for elementary, but also for the higher and for



the technical education of these children. Instruction should also be given in the Indian vernaculars in school hours. I should like the European public to lay emphasis upon this requirement for, so long as such instruction is not given, it is a legitimate excuse for the Indian community to ask for the admission of clerks and others so instructed, for the proper keeping of their books, which are at present kept in their vernaculars as it is impossible at present for their own children to become proficient in the Indian vernaculars in this country.

### *Harsh and Unjust Impost*

These are the most important general grievances of which the Indian community has good reason to complain at present. Beyond these there are a number of specific disabilities imposed upon the Indian residents of the different Provinces such as Law 3 of 1885 in the Transvaal or the Gold Law and the Townships Act of 1908 which prevents Indians from residing or trading except in locations in all so called gold areas. But I do not propose tonight to deal with them. To one such only I wish to make particular reference, and that is the £3 tax imposed in Natal upon all ex-indentured Indians and their descendants, men and women, boys above sixteen years and even girls above thirteen years being included, who do not return to India after the expiry of their indentures and who do not desire to re-indenture. I make bold to say that it is difficult to imagine a more harsh and unjust impost, bringing, as it does, untold misery upon those who are required to pay it. Whatever its justification may have been at a time when there was a genuine fear of the country being overrun with indentured Indians who were being brought here in the interests of a section of the European population itself there is no doubt that, since the stoppage of indentured recruitment in India there no longer remains even that shadow of justification for the imposition of this tax. I discussed this subject with a large number of persons in Natal, and I did not find a single individual to justify or support it. And it was a pleasure to me to find that even those who had, two years ago strongly upheld the impost, are now agreed that it should be abolished altogether. I may state that strong representations in this matter were made by me to the Government today, and I have every reason to believe that the matter will receive the early and sympathetic attention of the Ministers.

### *Social Disabilities*

Ladies and gentlemen, it is impossible on an occasion like this to do more than indicate in general outline the more serious and pressing of the Indian grievances in this country. And you will not understand me, in what I have mentioned, to have exhausted the whole list. Neither have I touched on that part of our disabilities which though acutely felt in the daily life of the community, cannot be put right by any direct action of the Government—I mean the social disabilities. I must say that I am astonished at the strength and

intensity of the colour prejudice that exists in this land. I had heard a good deal about it before my arrival, and I was prepared for a certain measure of it. But not till I actually was in this country did I realize the full force with which it operates nor the extent to which it prevails. However, the only hope of a remedy in such matters is in the steady improvement of the general situation and the gradual education of the heart. Meanwhile it is wise to take note of the existence of this prejudice in any solution of present difficulties that may be thought of or attempted.

### *Plea for Full Justice to Indians*

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say a word publicly to the Government of this country. The difficulties of its position are great and undoubted. The delicate relations between the two European races, the special problems connected with the future of the vast native population, the powerful colour prejudice, the widespread apprehension among a section of the white population that their material interests are seriously threatened by Indian competition—all these make the position of the Government one of exceptional difficulty. And though its duty to secure the fullest justice to the resident Indian community is clear, I freely recognize that the strongest Government that may be conceived of will not be strong enough to redress all Indian grievances at once, and would be hurled from power, if it attempted to do so. I feel it is incumbent on the Indian community to realize this fully and not pitch its expectation too high—to exercise patience and self-restraint as far as possible, in order to facilitate the task of the Government, for any impatient or vehement insistence on immediate relief being granted, where the Government itself is not in a position to grant it without a considerable change in public opinion, can only retard, and not hasten, remedial action. But, while admitting all this, I feel strongly that the face of the Government must be set all through in the right direction, and the progress, slow as it may be, must be steady and continuous towards full justice to the Indian population. It is one of the primary duties of every Government to ensure justice to all who are living under its protection, and the Government of South Africa owes this duty to the Indian population as much as to any other section of the community. And the fact that the Indians have no votes only emphasizes this duty still further. The Indians resident in South Africa are a part and parcel of the general population, and their welfare must be an object of serious solicitude to the Government, unless the idea is to hold them down permanently as a depressed community, which I cannot believe. Those who form the Government may be dependent on the votes of the European population for their position. But once they assume the functions of Government, they make themselves responsible for even-handed justice to all, and to those who are least able to protect themselves from oppression and injustice they are bound to give their protection most.

*Appeal for Right Solution*

My final word tonight will be one of appeal to what I would call the better mind of the two communities, European and Indian. To the European community I would respectfully say you have all the power and yours, therefore, is the responsibility for the manner in which the affairs of this land are administered. You cannot believe in your heart of hearts that whatever temporary advantages may be gained by those who have power from a policy based on obvious injustice, selfishness, or unreasoning prejudice, such advantages can long endure. You owe it to your good name, you owe it to your civilization, you owe it to the Empire of which you are part and whose flag stands for justice and freedom and opportunities for progress for all who live under its protection, that your administration should be such that you can justify it in the eyes of the civilized world. That you have votes, and the Indians have not, only throws a double responsibility on you, the responsibility for actively promoting their prosperity and well being as well as yours. The affairs of this country must no doubt be administered in accordance with European standards and by men who understand the spirit and working of European institutions, but the Government must exist for promoting the prosperity not of the European community only, but of all its subjects, else it is a travesty of Government to them.

To my own countrymen resident in this land, my parting appeal is always remember that your future is largely in your own hands. You have by no means an easy position here, and it is not impossible that it may grow even worse. But, whatever happens, do not lose faith or give way to despair. I pray to God that such a struggle as you found it necessary to wage in the Transvaal during the last three years may not have to be waged again. But if it has to be resumed or if you have to enter on other struggles of a like nature for justice denied or injustice forced on you, remember that the issue will largely turn on the character you show, on your capacity for combined action, on your readiness to suffer and sacrifice in a just cause. India will no doubt be behind you. Such assistance as she can give shall freely come to you. Her passionate sympathy, her heart, her hopes will be with you. Nay, all that is best in this Empire, all that is best in the civilized world, will wish you success. But the main endeavour to have your wrongs righted shall have to be yours. Remember that you are entitled to have the Indian problem in this country solved on right lines. And in such right solution are involved not merely your present worldly interests, but your dignity and self respect, the honour and good name of your Motherland, and the entire moral and material well being of your children and your children's children.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will now bring my remarks to a close. I thank you for the kind and indulgent manner in which you have listened to me. And to all of you I say good bye and farewell.

## SOUTH AFRICAN IMPRESSIONS

### *Gokhale's Address at Bombay Meeting*

*Gokhale returned to Bombay from South Africa on Friday, December 13, 1912. On Saturday, December 14, 1912 he addressed a largely attended public meeting in the Town Hall at Bombay. The meeting was convened, on a requisition from influential citizens, by the Sheriff; and was presided over by Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. After the Chairman's introductory remarks, Gokhale addressed the meeting as follows :*

I cannot tell you how glad I am to be back again in India and my joy is further intensified by the kind and cordial greetings which this great gathering has extended to me and by the generous terms in which you, Sir, have spoken of my work in South Africa. Your warm welcome, joined to the undoubted satisfaction with which our countrymen in South Africa have regarded the visit, is to me ample reward for such strain as the work imposed on me while it lasted. You probably know, what I have publicly stated more than once, that my visit was undertaken in response to an earnest invitation, repeatedly pressed on me by our great countryman there, Mr. Gandhi. When I first made up my mind, however, to pay the visit, my idea was to go about the country as quietly as possible, to visit all important Indian centres, to collect such facts as I could concerning the treatment to which our countrymen were subjected there and on my return to India to lay those facts before the Government and the people of this country in the hope of stimulating thereby greater exertions on this side in support of the Indian cause in South Africa. And it was not till I actually landed at Cape Town and saw the elaborate programme which had been drawn up for me that I realized what work was expected of me by my countrymen there.

Again it was no part of my first plan to seek to approach the authorities in South Africa directly with a statement of Indian grievances. That suggestion was first made to me by the authorities in London. I think I am committing no indiscretion when I state that it was Lord Crewe<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Harcourt<sup>2</sup> who strongly suggested to me the extreme desirability of my seeking an opportunity to discuss the Indian question personally with the Ministers in South Africa. My answer to them at that time, however, was of a tentative nature. I said that I should be glad to act on the suggestion, if I found it possible to do so consistently with self-respect. If I was subjected to serious indignities in South Africa, as I had fully apprehended I might be, then I said that I should not care to thrust myself on the Ministers. When, however, I reached Cape Town and actually saw how anxious the Union Government was to treat me

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 391.

<sup>2</sup> VISCOUNT HARCOURT (1863-1922); Secretary for the Colonies (1910-15).

with every consideration and how arrangements had already been made for my meeting not only my own countrymen at all important centres, but also members of the European community at those centres, the only thing left to me was to enter whole heartedly into the spirit of the arrangements and utilize to the full the opportunities placed within my reach. To have done anything else in these circumstances would have been to betray the cause which I had gone there to serve and to show myself unworthy of the confidence which my countrymen there had chosen to repose in me.

#### *Four Weeks in South Africa*

Gokhale then described how his four weeks in South Africa were spent in visiting important Indian centres, meeting not only thousands of Indian residents in that country, but also a large number of Europeans, many of them men of note, addressing meetings sometimes composed exclusively of Indians, sometimes of Europeans, but more often mixed gatherings of both Europeans and Indians and discussing the several phases of the question in interviews and at conferences with leading men of all shades of opinion and representing various interests. He was already fairly familiar with the Indian side of the question and it did not take him long after his arrival at Cape Town to acquire a firm grasp of the facts of the case so far as the Indians were concerned. And the access that he was enabled to have to the European community gave him exceptional opportunities to acquaint himself with the feelings and opinions of different sections of the European community. After examining the whole question from every point of view, Gokhale met the Ministers, General Botha, General Smuts and Mr Fischer, on 14th November at Pretoria in a long interview lasting for two hours, when they went over the whole ground point by point and there was a full and frank interchange of views, the Ministers promising a careful consideration of the case submitted to them and they on their side explaining what they considered to be the special difficulties of the position. On the following day, Gokhale had an opportunity of laying the whole matter before the Governor General, H. E. Lord Gladstone, and then he left South Africa, feeling satisfied in his own mind that he had done all that he was capable of and bringing away with him the liveliest recollections of the wealth of affection lavished on him by his countrymen there, of the extreme kindness with which the European community had treated him and of the great consideration and courtesy shown to him by the Union Government.

#### *Smooth Progress of Visit*

Proceeding, Gokhale said. Before I attempt to give you an idea of the state of things as I found it there, I should like to make one or two observations of a somewhat personal character. The first is about the extreme difficulty of my position in South Africa. Never before in all my life, I assure you, had I to walk on such difficult and delicate ground, nor did I ever feel so oppressed with a sense of responsibility as during my four weeks in South Africa.

Even the special courtesy and consideration shown me by the Union Government, while it undoubtedly facilitated my work, added in a way to my difficulties, for, while one section of the European community, the extreme anti-Indian section, was resentful that such consideration should have been shown to me, those who represented the better European mind, though satisfied at heart that the right thing had been done, were nervous as to whether undue advantage might not be taken of the position to put a forced interpretation on what had been done. On the Indian side, on the other hand, the feeling in the matter was one of rather excessive jubilation. In such circumstances, a single thoughtless act or even an unguarded expression, not only on my part but on the part of any one of our countrymen there—and they were meeting me daily in most enthusiastic demonstrations—might have resulted in serious unpleasantness and embarrassment all round inflicting an injury on the cause, difficult soon to remedy. Throughout my four weeks, the dread of this possibility never left me for a moment and constantly weighed me down, and I thank God here today, speaking in your midst, as I did at Pretoria on the occasion of my last speech in South Africa, that no untoward incident marred the smooth progress of my visit and that even if no actual good results from my labours there, at any rate I am happy to feel that I have done no harm.

### *Tribute to Gandhi*

My second observation will be about my dear and illustrious friend Mr. Gandhi. From the moment I landed at Cape Town to the moment I left South Africa and even afterwards during nearly the whole of my visit to East Africa, Mr. Gandhi was with me and we were together nearly every moment of our waking hours. He had taken upon himself the duties of my private secretary, but he was in reality my guide, philosopher and friend. I do not wish to speak on this occasion of the devoted love with which he surrounded me, but I feel it to be my duty to pay a brief, though altogether inadequate, tribute to the great work he has done for India in South Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, only those who have come in personal contact with Mr. Gandhi, as he is now, can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more. He has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs. During the recent passive resistance struggle in the Transvaal—would you believe it?—twenty-seven hundred sentences of imprisonment were borne by our countrymen there under Mr. Gandhi's guidance to uphold the honour of their country. Some of the men among them were very substantial persons, some were small traders, but the bulk of them were poor humble individuals, hawkers, working men and so forth, men without education, men not accustomed in their life to think or talk of their country. And yet these men braved the horrors of gaol life in the Transvaal and some of them braved them again and again rather than submit to degrading legislation directed against their country. Many homes were

broken in the course of that struggle, many families dispersed, some men, at one time wealthy, lost their all and became paupers, women and children endured untold hardships. But they were touched by Mr Gandhi's spirit and that wrought the transformation, thus illustrating the great power which the spirit of man can exercise over human minds and even over physical surroundings. In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr Gandhi does, our great patriarch, Mr Dadabhai Naoroji<sup>1</sup>, and my late master, Mr Ranade<sup>2</sup>—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy.

The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr Gandhi. Without self and without strain he has fought his great fight for this country during a period now of twenty years and India owes an immense debt of gratitude to him. He has sacrificed himself utterly in the service of the cause. He had a splendid practice at the bar, making as much as five to six thousand pounds a year, which is considered to be a very good income for a lawyer in South Africa. But he has given all that up and he lives now on £3 a month like the poorest man in the street. One most striking fact about him is that though he has waged this great struggle so ceaselessly his mind is absolutely free from all bitterness against Europeans. And in my tour nothing warmed my heart more than to see the universal esteem in which the European community in South Africa held Mr Gandhi. At every gathering leading Europeans when they came to know that Mr Gandhi was there, would immediately gather round him anxious to shake hands with him, making it quite clear that though they fought him hard and tried to crush him in the course of the struggle, they honoured him as a man. To my mind Mr Gandhi's leadership of the Indian cause in South Africa is the greatest asset of that cause and it was an inestimable privilege to me that he was with me throughout my tour to pilot me safely through my difficulties.

### *The Position Analysed*

Proceeding to describe the position of the Indians in South Africa Gokhale said that the Union of South Africa consisted of four provinces—Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal and Orangia—and in the whole Union there was a total Indian population of about a hundred and fifty thousand persons. Of that, roughly speaking, about a hundred and twenty thousand were in Natal, about twenty thousand were in the Cape and about ten thousand were in the Transvaal. In Orangia there were hardly any Indians, the total number not exceeding a hundred, as some years ago the Boer Government of that time forcibly expelled from the Republic all Indians except such as were domestic servants. Four-fifths of the entire Indian population in South Africa represented indentured labourers, ex-indentured labourers and their descendants. The remaining

<sup>1</sup> See foot note on p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> See foot note on p. 197.

were free persons who had gone there at their own expense in the wake of the indentured labourers. One peculiarity of the position which the meeting had to realize was that there was no educated class among the Indians in South Africa similar to the educated class of this country, the men who followed, what were called, learned or liberal professions being so few as to be counted on one's fingers. The bulk of the people were either tradesmen or working men and a few were domestic servants. The traders were most of them petty traders, though some were fairly substantial. Speaking roughly, there were about two thousand traders and five to six thousand hawkers in each one of the three provinces mentioned. Of the working men a large proportion were still serving their indentures, while the rest were ex-indentured labourers or their descendants. In the Cape Indians could acquire both the municipal and the political franchise. In Natal they had the municipal franchise but not the political, and in the two Dutch provinces they were rigorously excluded from both the municipal and the political franchise.

The present Immigration Law was different for the different provinces. In Cape Colony and Natal Indians could enter only by passing a test in a European language and the average number of such immigrants for the last few years was between 40 and 50 for the two provinces together—a surprisingly small number. In the Transvaal and Orangia, new Indians were at present prohibited altogether from entering by law. The traders' and hawkers' licences in Cape Colony and Natal had to be renewed every year and the grant of new licences lay in the discretion of local authorities manned almost entirely by the European trade rivals of Indian traders. In the Transvaal, on the other hand, licences had to be granted as a matter of course for the mere tender of a licence fee. But there were two laws in force there, known as the Gold Law and the Townships Act, the combined effect of which was to make those licences practically worthless. Wherever an area was declared to be a gold area under those laws, Indians could only reside and trade in special locations, situated as a rule at some distance from the towns. In Cape Colony and Natal, Indians could own land and acquire other immoveable property, which they could not do in the Transvaal and Orangia. In addition to these there were several minor disabilities, including many galling social ones of greater or less severity in the different provinces. Finally there was hardly any provision for the education of Indian children. A few primary schools were to be found here and there, mostly maintained by missionary bodies or by the community itself. Throughout South Africa there was no provision of any kind for the secondary, higher or technical education of Indian children.

### *A Heart-Rending Situation*

When the speaker arrived in South Africa and took a broad survey of the Indian position as he found it, he confessed his heart for a time sank within him. The position in many ways was truly pitiable and heart-rending. It was well-known that the lot of their countrymen in the Transvaal, hard as it was



in the days of the Boer Republic, had grown far harder since it became a British province. But it was not so well-known that in Natal and even in the Cape the situation had been steadily getting worse since the Union, the harsh anti-Indian Transvaal spirit gradually infecting the whole Union. Gokhale found on his arrival that almost every section of the Indian community throughout South Africa was filled with a serious dread about its future, a feeling of insecurity, harassment and oppression prevailing generally such as was bound to demoralize any community. A large proportion of the European population was evidently determined to make things so intolerable for the Indians there that they should of their own accord get out of the country. Not only were some of the laws under which they lived harsh and unjust, but even the administration of other laws, which in themselves were neither harsh nor unjust, was so oppressive as to drive the community well nigh to despair. Thus the Immigration Law in regard to old Indian settlers in the Cape and Natal was being so worked as to fill every one with the fear that if he left the country temporarily on a visit to India or elsewhere, he might have difficulty in getting back. About the same time as Gokhale's arrival at Cape Town, a case occurred there illustrating what he was saying. At present an Indian settler in that province, wishing to be temporarily absent from the country, had to take out a permit with him, specifying the period within which he should return. An Indian trader, who had thus left with a year's permit on a visit to India, leaving his business in charge of his wife and children, returned one day late, owing to his steamer having been held up four days on the way by a storm. If the steamer had run according to scheduled time, he would have arrived at Cape Town three days before the expiry of his permit. And yet on the technical ground that he had not returned within the specified time, he was turned back, his business ruined and his wife and children put under the necessity of leaving the country!

Similarly in Natal old settlers were provided with domicile certificates, which were supposed to give them the right of going out of the country and coming back whenever they liked, the only provision being that the Immigration Officer should satisfy himself about the genuineness of the certificates. In exercise of that power even holders of certificates, 15 or 16 years old, well-known persons, were being cross-examined on their return to Natal after a temporary absence, as to minute details of where they lived, what they did when they first arrived and so forth. And the smallest discrepancy between the answers unwarily given by the men and the actual recorded facts was deemed sufficient to justify the rejection of the certificates compelling the holders to return to India, absolutely ruined men. Now the speaker would put it to his European friends on the platform how many of them, if they were suddenly asked all sorts of questions as to when they first came into this country, where they lived, what they did and so on, would be able to answer such questions without making any mistake.

Again, the question of trading and hawking licences was agitating the

Indian mind gravely throughout Cape Colony and Natal. Both provinces had now clearly entered on a policy of granting no new licences to Indians as far as possible and of steadily extinguishing all existing licences as opportunities offered themselves. As those licences were renewable every year, a feeling of the utmost uncertainty as to what would happen to his licence, when the time for a renewal came, filled the mind of every Indian trader. Business men in Bombay would have no difficulty in understanding how ruinous must be the consequences of such a state of things and how such constant anxiety about the future must paralyze and finally destroy all business enterprise among the persons affected. In the Transvaal, the steady extension of the gold area condemning Indian traders to trade and reside only in locations was in itself a frightful hardship.

### *Relentless Oppression*

But some local authorities were carrying the policy of relentless oppression still further by breaking up old locations if Indians were found to be doing business successfully in them and ordering them to remove to fresh locations even more disadvantageously situated. The speaker had personally visited several locations and he could only say that the whole policy involved in them deserved to be denounced in the strongest terms. They would thus see how gravely disturbed and anxious the mind of the Indian trading community in South Africa was. The labouring population, in addition to many disabilities, laboured under a special grievance of their own, which caused them untold suffering, i.e., the £3 Licence Tax. The speaker had no hesitation in saying that a more cruel impost it was impossible to conceive. Under it all ex-indentured Indians in Natal who completed their indentures after 1901, and their descendants were liable to pay annually £3 each, all males above the age of 16 and females above the age of 13 being so liable. And for non-payment they were sent to jail with hard labour. That under any law a girl of 13 should have to pay £3 a year to the State and should be liable to be sent to jail with hard labour for non-payment, was a thing too horrible to contemplate. If they took an ordinary family of a father, a mother and two daughters of 13 and 15, with one or two younger children, they would find that the family had to pay £12 a year for the mere permission to live in the colony of Natal — and that after the man and the woman had contributed five years' labour to the prosperity of the Colony under a system of indenture! Now the average monthly wage of the man might be taken at about 25 shillings and the woman with her two daughters, after looking after the household, might earn about 15 shillings a month among them — a total income of about £2 a month. Out of that sum £1 or full one half had to be given as that miserable Licence Tax. After that there was rent to pay and cost of food and clothing and all ordinary taxes common to the general community. Need anybody wonder that a prominent member of the Natal Legislature declared openly two years ago that the impost broke up families, drove men into paths of

crime and women into lives of shame? One of the most harrowing sights, at which Gokhale had to be present, was a meeting in Durban of those who were liable to pay the £3 Tax. About 5,000 persons were present. As man after man and woman after woman came forward and narrated his or her suffering due to the Tax, it was impossible not to feel overwhelmed by feelings of indignation, pity and sorrow. One old woman of 65 was there who had been to jail six times for inability to pay the tax and Gokhale could not recall the case, even after that interval, without emotion. As things stood, unless a fairly satisfactory settlement was soon arrived at, it would not take many years for the Indian community of South Africa to be practically harassed out of the country after undergoing great suffering and losses.

### *Position of European Community*

That was the position of the Indian community as he found it. He wanted next to describe to them briefly the position of the European community. It was necessary to understand that position clearly, to understand their interests, their difficulties, their views and their sentiments and even their prejudices. They were a handful of people—only about a million and a quarter in all—in the midst of a vast indigenous population at a totally different grade of civilization. And the contact between the two races had created grave problems—social, political, economic and moral—which were already filling the European mind in that sub-continent with uneasiness, misgivings and even dread. And they found in the midst of their difficult and complicated situation a third element introduced, belonging to another civilization and representing other modes of life and thought. It was true that the present number of Indians in South Africa was only a lakh and a half against twelve and half lakhs of Europeans. But the Europeans felt that there were 300 millions of people in India and if Indians continued to come freely into South Africa, there was nothing to prevent several millions from going there and swamping the European community and practically making the country another India. The fear was based on an absolute misapprehension, but it was there, deep and strong and general, and no useful purpose would be served by shutting one's eyes to it. In addition to this, there was the tremendous colour prejudice which existed in that land—a prejudice felt even more by the Dutch than by the English—and there was also the dread of Indian competition on the part of small European traders, who felt that they could not hold their own against their Indian rivals in a fair field, owing to the Indians' less expensive scale of living. The combined result of all these three causes was the present harsh and oppressive policy towards Indians—a policy plainly directed to making the lot of the Indians in that country so hard as practically to compel them to leave the country or, if remain they must, to remain there as a servile, degraded and depressed community.

### *The Way Out*

Such was the position, grave, anxious and extremely difficult. What was to

be the way out of it? So long as the European mind in South Africa was dominated by the fear of a serious influx of Indians swamping the Europeans, so long there was no chance of securing, leave alone absolute equality, even reasonably just and humane treatment for our countrymen, such as would enable them to live in peace and security and steadily advance to the position of a worthy element in a self-governing community. Even the best friends of Indians among the Europeans in South Africa—and there was a small section that could be thus described—were convinced that unless the fear of being swamped was removed from the European mind, they were powerless to urge with any effect the plea of juster and more humane treatment for the Indian community.

Another section, a much larger section, that had the sense of fairness to feel heartily ashamed of the present policy pursued towards the Indians, would also then, but not till then, sympathize with the struggle of the Indians against their present treatment. The Indian community of South Africa itself also clearly felt the necessity of removing that fear, groundless more or less though it was, in view of the fact that the average number of free immigrants during the last few years had been only between 40 and 50—a figure, however, which the ordinary European there did not accept and could not be persuaded to accept as correct. For some time past, therefore, the policy of our countrymen in South Africa, under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi, was, while insisting on maintaining intact their theoretical rights as equal subjects of the Empire in the legislation of the country, to strive for such a modification in practice of the present policy of injustice and oppression as would enable the community to live and prosper in peace and security and steadily advance in status and importance in that land. And even the briefest visit that one could pay to South Africa would satisfy one that that was the only wise, sound, practical, and statesmanlike course for the Indians to adopt in existing circumstances. It was in accordance with that course that in the compromise which was arrived at between Mr. Gandhi and General Smuts last year, under which the Passive Resistance movement was suspended, the Union Government agreed not to make any legislative differentiation against Indians in the proposed new Immigration Law, Mr. Gandhi on his side agreeing that in practice the discretion vested in the executive, administering the law, might be exercised by the administration as it thought reasonable, subject to a minimum number of Indians being admitted every year to supply the higher needs of the community and replace its wear and tear in certain directions. That minimum was six Indians for the Transvaal, where under the existing law no Indian whatever was admitted. For the whole Union the minimum now asked was forty, which was the present number of free immigrants annually on an average of several years. The essence of the compromise was that by removing legislative inequality, the theoretical rights of the Indians as subjects of the Empire should be maintained, while by agreeing to a limitation of new immigrants to the present average number, the fear of an indiscriminate influx, which haunted

the European mind, should be removed. Once that was done, the Indians there could struggle far more effectively than at present for juster, more equal and more humane treatment in other respects. Gokhale's own work in South Africa had been done on those lines. He did not ask for an inch either more or less than what the Indian community there had been asking. His one advantage was that he was enabled to have access to the European community, as no other Indian had it before him and he was thus enabled to address his appeal for justice and humanity to the very heart and conscience of the European community, speaking to its members face to face.

### *Open Door Policy*

On his return to India the previous day, Gokhale was astonished to learn that the view was expressed in some quarters that the line taken by him in South Africa was wrong, that he should have stood out there for the open door in practice and nothing less, and that the surrender of India's rights in the matter, already made by Mr. Gandhi, had been confirmed by him. All he would say in regard to that criticism was that those who passed it did not show any real grasp of the problem in South Africa. The supreme question for the Indian community there was not to urge a policy of the open door for more Indians to come there, but to secure such an amelioration of the conditions under which they lived that their lot might become more bearable and they might have opportunities of growing into an important part of a self-governing community. And the only chance of their securing that was if they approached the whole question in a practical spirit. Gokhale could certainly have stood out for the open door in practice in South Africa. He could have made brave speeches on that subject and could have returned to his country feeling that he had made brave speeches. But the cause of the Indian community in South Africa could not have been served that way. The European community would have been made, if anything, more implacable in its determination to get rid of the Indians at all costs and the eventual expulsion of Indians from that sub-continent would only have been hastened by such a course.

As regards the charge brought against Mr. Gandhi, it amounted to an utter travesty of the actual facts. After all their rights to equal treatment in the Empire today were largely theoretical. But even to maintain them theoretically intact Mr. Gandhi had four times to go to jail and had inspired hundreds of his countrymen to do the same. Those theoretical rights would no doubt steadily grow more and more into rights enjoyed actually in practice, but that was a matter of slow growth and it depended in a large measure upon the improvement of their position in India itself.

### *Present Outlook*

In concluding, Gokhale said: Ladies and Gentlemen, before I sit down you may well ask me what is now the outlook in South Africa. Well, the catalogue of our grievances there is so long that, as General Botha said to me in

the course of our interview, even the strongest Ministry that could be conceived in South Africa today would not be strong enough to remedy those grievances all at once, and if it attempted any such thing, it would straightway be hurled from power. The situation is such that though we must keep up the struggle ceaselessly, we must not expect anything else than a slow, though steady, amelioration of our lot. But I think in certain matters relief will be forthcoming almost immediately.

In the first place, I fully expect that the provisional settlement arrived at between Mr. Gandbi and General Smuts as regards the Passive Resistance movement, which the Government found itself powerless to carry through Parliament last session, will be successfully carried through this year. The actual working of the Immigration Law also will, I expect, soon become milder and more considerate. Then that outrageous impost, the three pound licence tax, will, I fully expect, go in the course of this year. In fact I may mention that the Ministers have authorized me to say that they will do their best to remove the grievance as early as possible. In the matter of education also the position will materially improve and the actual administration of laws, such as the Gold Law and the Townships Act, will tend to become less and less burdensome. In one respect, however, I fear the position will not soon change for the better and it is even possible that it may grow worse before it becomes better. And that is in regard to Trading Licences. Here, however, our community is fighting for bare justice. And it has behind it in the matter the sympathy not only of the Government of India and of the Imperial Government but also of the better mind of the European community in South Africa. And in the struggle, if only we in this country do our duty properly, our countrymen there will win.

And this brings me to my concluding observations. Ladies and Gentlemen, I strongly feel, many friends of our cause in England and South Africa also feel, that so far India has not done her duty by her children across the seas, struggling to uphold her honour amidst unparalleled difficulties. One man amongst us, it is true, has set a great and glorious example—my friend Mr. Ratan Tata<sup>1</sup>—whose name, I assure you, is held in the deepest affection and gratitude by the Indian community in South Africa. A committee in Madras has also done some work and a committee here has collected some funds, but all this, taken together, amounts to but little, considering the issues involved. I hope, however, that whatever may have been our remissness in the past, we shall do better in this respect in the future. I hope we shall all take in the future more interest in what will go on in South Africa, follow the developments more carefully and enable our countrymen there to feel that we stand solid and united behind them. I hope too that we shall collect and send much larger funds in aid of the cause there than we have hitherto done. Remember the community there is already exhausted financially and otherwise by its

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p. 417.

long struggle Remember also that it requires assistance not only in waging this most unequal struggle, but also for providing educational and other facilities for the moral and material well-being of its children Remember finally that it is not merely the interest of the Indian community in South Africa that is involved in the struggle, but our whole future as a nation in this Empire is involved in it In proportion as we do our duty in this matter, shall we have advanced more and more towards a position in this Empire worthy of the self-respect of civilized beings In proportion as we do this duty, shall we have deserved well of our country, of our children and our children's children.

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## SOUTH AFRICAN REPORT

*The National Congress held its 1912 session at Bankipore in Behar on December 27 and the following two days. It gave special consideration to the problem of Indians in the Colonies generally, and that of those in South Africa in particular. Gokhale who had only recently returned from South Africa after his triumphal study tour was requested to propose the resolution on the subject. In doing so he made the following speech :*

I beg to move the following Resolution for your adoption :

(a) This Congress, anticipating the forthcoming legislation of the provisional settlement recently arrived at, cordially congratulates Mr. Gandhi and the Transvaal Indian community upon the repeal of the anti-Asiatic legislation of the Province regarding registration and immigration, and expresses its high admiration of the intense patriotism, courage and self-sacrifice with which they—Mahomedan and Hindu, Zoroastrian and Christian—have suffered persecution in the interests of their countrymen during their peaceful and selfless struggle for elementary civil rights against overwhelming odds.

(b) Whilst appreciating the endeavours that have been made from time to time to secure the redress of the grievances of the Indians of South Africa and other British Colonies, this Congress urges that, in view of the avowed inability of His Majesty's Government to adopt a firm and decisive attitude in this matter, the Government of India should take such retaliatory measures as may be calculated to protect Indian self-respect and the interests of Indian residents in those parts of the Empire, and thus remove a great source of discontent among the people of this country.

(c) This Congress further protests against the declarations of responsible statesmen in favour of allowing the self-governing colonies in the British Empire to monopolise vast undeveloped territories for exclusive white settlements and deems it its duty to point out that the policy of shutting the door in these territories against, and denying the rights of full British citizenship to all Asiatic subjects of the British Crown, while preaching and enforcing the opposite policy of the open door in Asia is fraught with grave mischief to the Empire and is as unwise as it is unrighteous.

(d) Whilst thanking the Government of India for the prohibition of the recruitment of indentured Indian labour for South Africa, this Congress is strongly of opinion that in the highest national interests, the system of indentured labour is undesirable and should be abolished, and respectfully urges the Government to prohibit the further recruitment of Indian labour under contract of indenture, whether for service at home or abroad."



In moving the resolution, Gokhale spoke as follows

This resolution is the same as the one that this Congress adopted last year, and though it covers the case of all the colonies and in addition makes some recommendations about the abolition of the system of indentured labour in general, I propose in my remarks to confine myself to the case of South Africa, and I hope that the speakers who will follow me will deal with the other aspects of the question. I ask you to repeat the resolutions of last year this year because the position in South Africa continues today to be what it was last year. This Resolution, I may state, was drafted jointly by Mr Polak and myself, Mr Polak supplying the standpoint of the Indian community in South Africa. You are aware that I have just returned from South Africa and while there my work was done entirely on the lines of this resolution, and I therefore submit this resolution for your acceptance with the utmost confidence.

*No Assurances Given*

Ladies and gentlemen, before I describe to you the situation in South Africa as it is today, I should like, in fact I deem it my duty, to correct one or two misapprehensions under which a few friends and co workers of mine appear to labour in connection with my work in South Africa. It is said that I have made, I have given certain assurances to the Union Government and to the European community of South Africa in the name of India which I had no business to give. And it is further said that Mr Gandhi and myself have practically surrendered India's rights in the matter of immigration. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if there were even a particle of truth in either of these two statements, I should not cease to regret my visit to South Africa till my dying day. As a matter of fact, however, I state at once, state categorically, I state with all the emphasis at my command that there is not a word of truth in these two statements. First as regards the question of assurances, neither I nor Mr. Gandhi nor anybody else has given any assurance to anybody in South Africa, neither to the Government of South Africa nor to the European community of South Africa. Much less has anybody given any assurance in the name of India. For myself I took care on every possible occasion to point out the capacity in which I was working there, and the very first thing that I said to General Botha and the other Ministers, when I met them in an interview which they were pleased to grant me, was that I was there without any official credentials from India and that I had not even been deputed by the people of India to go and help my countrymen there. I was there simply and solely as a private individual from India invited by the Indian community of South Africa to go over and help them and my only purpose at that time was to represent the views and the grievances of the Indian community of South Africa to the authorities of South Africa. There could be, there were, no negotiations between the Boer Government and myself. There can be no negotiations between the Government of a great country and a private individual such as I was. I had neither the authority nor the position to enter into any

negotiations with the South African Government. So far about the question of assurances.

### *No Surrender of India's Rights*

Then it is said that Mr. Gandhi and myself have surrendered India's rights in the matter of immigration. Let me assure you again, fellow-delegates, that there is not a particle, not a tittle, not an iota of any right enjoyed by the people of India, whether in theory or in practice, that has been surrendered either by Mr. Gandhi or by myself in anything that we have done. I will proceed to explain this position more clearly to you when I describe the passive resistance struggle conducted by Mr. Gandhi and the object with which it was conducted. Because the South African Government tried to take away, not from the Indians in South Africa, but from the people of India here a right which they have all along enjoyed in theory, therefore Mr. Gandhi and the brave band of passive resisters working with him underwent all manner of suffering and made all manner of sacrifices in order that that right should not be so taken away; and ultimately they succeeded in preventing that right from being so taken away from the people of India.

But then it is said that in the provisional settlement which Mr. Gandhi had arrived at with General Smuts the principle of the free immigration of Indians into South Africa has been surrendered. I will come to examine that and when you hear what I have to say, I am sure you will see that Mr. Gandhi has done no such thing. After you hear the statement I have to make on this subject then it will be for you to judge between Mr. Gandhi and those who say he has made any sacrifice of any principle in this matter. What was the position, ladies and gentlemen, before the passive resistance struggle was started? At the end of the Boer War, taking the Immigration question only, the Immigration Law was the same in Cape Colony and Natal for Europeans and Indians alike. That is, everybody could get in by passing an education test. Now, of course, that was on paper. In actual practice the law was worked differently for Europeans and Indians; but at any rate in actual law, in actual theory, there was no difference between Europeans and Indians. In the Transvaal the Indians had to register themselves and to pay three pounds for registration. There was no registration required on the part of Europeans. In the Orange Free State, the Indians were expressly prohibited by a statute from entering that Colony. That was in the time of the Boer Government and therefore that was the position at the end of the Boer War. Therefore, there was no theoretical equality for our people in two of the Boer Provinces, leave alone practical equality. We had a sort of theoretical equality but no practical equality in Cape Colony and Natal. This was bad enough. But about five years ago the Government of the Transvaal attempted to take away from us such theoretical equality as we possessed and impose upon us harsh and humiliating conditions, and two laws were passed, one in 1907 and one in 1908 and, mind you, passed with the sanction and the assent of the Imperial Government, laws

which in the first place expressly prohibited us from entering the Transvaal by name as British Indians, and secondly which required all resident Indians to undergo registration and submit to most degrading conditions in thus registering themselves. These were the two laws that were then passed and this legislation was only the forerunner of similar legislation for the rest of South Africa.

It was well known that, if this legislation had been accepted by the Indian community, the same legislation would naturally have been extended to Natal and Cape Colony. Mr. Gandhi and those whom he led therefore made up their minds to sacrifice all, if that was necessary, but not to put up with this legislation and they started what is known as the Passive Resistance movement. The struggle was hard and bitter, as hard and bitter as any struggle of which we read in history. It lasted for nearly two years. Untold suffering was borne in the struggle, and sacrifices beyond your conception or mine were cheerfully undergone by our countrymen in South Africa in that struggle. Would you believe it, that 2,700 sentences of imprisonment were borne by the Indians in order that this degrading legislation should not be passed against our countrymen there? The legislation was only so far as the newcomers were concerned. The legislation did not affect the Indians who were already there. They were there already. The legislation only affected those who wanted to go there from here, but in order to maintain our theoretical equality with other parts of the Empire these brave men and women also (for they suffered greatly) underwent all this suffering rather than put up with this degradation. 2,700 sentences of imprisonment were borne, and borne by whom? Not by educated men. There are no educated Indians in South Africa. They were mostly men from the street, pedlars, hawkers, working men and so forth. But they were touched by Mr. Gandhi's spirit and, as I said in Bombay, that had wrought the transformation and they cheerfully underwent all that sacrifice. When men could not act for themselves any more—when most of the men were in jail—the women and children of tender years carried on the struggle. It was a struggle which will ever constitute a memorable chapter in the history of our people and all this struggle was gone through by our countrymen, because they wanted to prevent this theoretical equality which our people till then possessed from being taken away from them.

### *Settlement Misunderstood*

Well, but it is said "Well, that is all right, so far as the struggle is concerned it was all right, but then Mr. Gandhi afterwards entered into a compromise with General Smuts"—what is known as the provisional settlement to which the first clause refers—"and by that settlement, in accordance with that settlement, he practically surrendered the principle of the free immigration of Indians into South Africa." Ladies and Gentlemen, consider what that settlement was. Mr. Gandhi knew, as well as anybody else in that country could know, that there can be no free immigration for our people in the pre-

sent circumstances, into that country. It was not a question of practical politics; it was not a question of practical politics any more than the appointment of an Indian Viceroy today is a question of practical politics. You may keep that as a goal in the distance. You may steadily advance towards it, but then you cannot bring that up as a question of practical politics. In South Africa today, Mr. Gandhi did not want a racial bar against us in the legislation of that country and in order that that racial bar should not be there he brought forward this passive resistance movement; and he and those who were associated with him underwent all that sacrifice and all that suffering. From the beginning he had been contending that there should be no racial bar in the legislation. After that of course everything must depend upon the discretion of the executive.

Now here again there is a misapprehension. There is no doubt whatever that Mr. Gandhi has agreed to suspend the Passive Resistance movement on condition that a certain minimum number of Indians are admitted into the country under the terms of this agreement every year. But why then did he enter into this compromise? Just consider what the position would otherwise be without a stipulation of this character. The Union Government found itself driven by the Passive Resistance movement to have somewhat the same law for Europeans and Indians. But any law of this character must necessarily vest a large amount of discretion in the executive. In Australia and in Canada it is so and it is bound to be so in South Africa. In Australia, though nominally the law is the same for Europeans and Indians, not a single Indian is allowed to enter Australia in practice. The executive exercise their discretion in such a way as to prevent the Indians from entering. The Canadians are also going to adopt the same policy. They have made up their minds to allow no more Indians to go there and they are going to exercise their executive discretion in keeping out anybody who is an Indian. Mr. Gandhi was afraid that the same may be done in South Africa. The law may be the same for Europeans and Indians; but they would in the exercise of executive discretion say, "We will not have any more Indians." There is no appeal and no relief. The Imperial Government won't come to your assistance, The Government of India would not come to your assistance.

What was to be done? Taking the average of the last few years it was found that at least forty free Indians used to go into South Africa every year. There used to be two to three hundred labourers going in as indentured labourers. Of course the system of indentured labour has been stopped and I am glad, and I rejoice that the system of indentured labour has been stopped in South Africa. But taking the number of free Indians who immigrated into South Africa the average for the last few years was about 40 a year. That was what we actually enjoyed in practice. In theory there was a sort of equality, but in practice only 40 people were going into the Colony. Mr. Gandhi was afraid that though we may get the right of equality in theory, in practice even the forty might be lost. Therefore he insisted that this minimum of forty Indians

should be admitted into the Colony in the exercise of executive discretion. If they admitted more so much the better, but it should not be less than forty. That is what he had insisted upon — six for the Transvaal and the rest for the other colonies. He insisted upon this as part of the bargain. Thereby he thought that the position of Indians would not become any way worse than what it was.

If you look at it in this way, you will understand that it is not a limitation of the Indian right to immigrate freely into South Africa, but it was a limitation of the discretion of the executive, a discretion that otherwise might not admit anybody. If this limitation was not to be there, if this stipulation had not been made, the executive would be free not to admit any Indian and there would be no immigration. Would you prefer that? I am sure if you look at that question in that way you will see that even in agreeing to this minimum number, as Mr. Gandhi has done, he has only watched over the true interests of the Indian community in South Africa.

Then again you must remember this. It has been said 'Well, after this he gives up the struggle in connection with the Passive Resistance.' The struggle is suspended if the Government have the same law for all and admit at least forty Indians every year for the whole of South Africa — six in the Transvaal and so many others in the other colonies. All that Mr. Gandhi has done is that the recent struggle in this matter is over. There are so many other questions in regard to which the Indian community has to work, of which I will tell you presently. But so far as the particular question of immigration is concerned, having removed from the mother country this bar which was attempted to be placed on her path and having insured that our position there does not become worse than what it is, Mr. Gandhi thinks that it is wise, it is politic, it is statesmanly to leave the question at that. That does not mean that other Indians are not at liberty to agitate that question, if they please. That does not certainly mean that we in this country should not agitate that question if we like. Nothing ever has been said or done by him, or by me or by anybody else that could in any way fetter your discretion in this matter or in any other matter in regard to what you do in your own way. If there is any desire in this country to immigrate to South Africa and if more than 40 go there and are turned back, it becomes a legitimate grievance for you and by all means agitate in that matter and no man will wish you success in the matter more than Mr. Gandhi himself. He does not want that you should sit withfolded hands, but so far as he is concerned and the others associated with him are concerned, they feel that in this question of immigration nothing more is possible for them at present and such energy as they have, and such capacity as they have, and such resources as they have, they want to direct to other purposes. They want to direct them to the removal of other grievances far more pressing and far more intolerable than this restriction of immigration.

### *European Fears Unjustified*

Well, ladies and gentlemen, this briefly is the position so far as the provisi-

onal settlement is concerned. I will now proceed to state what those other grievances are to which I have just now briefly referred. But I hope you are quite clear now that no sort of guarantee has been given by anybody, no sort of guarantee was asked of us by anybody and we never dreamt of giving any guarantee to anybody. One expression was used both by Mr. Gandhi and myself, which I find has been misapprehended in this country. There is no question whatever that anybody who goes will see that the European mind in that country is dominated by the fear that the people of India will gradually swamp them and turn their country into another India. Now the position of the European there is extremely difficult. You may talk with an average European and you will find that he talks as if he were sitting on a volcano. He is surrounded by a large indigenous population and somehow there is a feeling, a vague feeling, on both sides that things are drifting towards a conflict, though they may not end actually in a conflict. It is the hope of the best men on the European, on the English side that there would be no conflict, but the average European feels that things are drifting towards a conflict. He naturally does not want the position to become still more complicated by the introduction into it of a third element, such as the entry of the Indian would constitute. At the present moment the number of Indians is 150,000 against a million and a quarter or 12½ lakhs Europeans. That itself appears to him to be a serious number; but he thinks and he feels constantly that there are 300 millions of people in India and he feels that if only a few millions went over from here to there — he always talks of India in millions, he feels that if only a few millions went over there from India, — it will be difficult for the European to maintain his position in that Colony. It may be that the feeling of fear is absolutely unjustifiable, as we know, because there is no desire in this country to emigrate to South Africa. What is there for us to do? There is no career there for educated men. Only small traders can flourish there and they are subjected to the utmost indignity possible. The people are taken by the Government under indentures and the population has gone on increasing. Now that the indenture system has been stopped, the Indian population of South Africa, unless better treated, is bound to dwindle down gradually till at last it disappears. Therefore, there is no question, so far as we are concerned, there is no desire on our part to go and flood that country, as each one can think for himself. But the Indian community there is however suspected of a design by the European community — the Indians were suspected of a design to import from India Indians in large numbers so as to swamp that country and so as to occupy everything that is worth occupying by Indians themselves. Mr. Gandhi and those who are associated with him see that as long as this fear dominates the European mind, so long there is no chance of the other grievances of free Indians being redressed; and the other grievances you will understand are far more intolerable than even this grievance about the restriction of immigration. What however matters to them — and this is a point upon which people have not been clear in this country — what matters to them is not what we do

here The South Africans do not care for what we do in this country They ask for no guarantee as to what we do in this country You may start any number of agitations; and they do not care They only care for any agitation that may be started there, like the passive resistance movement started by Mr Gandhi If there is an agitation in that country by the Indian community resident in South Africa on the subject of immigration, then of course the fear becomes intensified If there is no such agitation there by the Indian community, that fear is allayed Mr Gandhi and others who are working with him recognize that having effected so much on the subject of immigration, the question of immigration might be left aside, and later on when the community grows strong and when India supports that community better than she has done in the past and Indians themselves count more in the Government, then that question may be reopened, or perhaps another generation may take up this question and press it still further, but for the moment at any rate nothing more under this head is possible And therefore Mr Gandhi is content to leave that question at that It is like our own selves in this Congress, taking at one time one reform and pressing it in the forefront leaving others in the background, at another time taking up another question and pressing it, leaving the rest in the background They therefore took up this question and after fighting it up to a certain point left it at that without sacrificing or surrendering an iota of any one's rights the rights either of the Indians there or the Indians in this country.

### *"Equal Citizenship?"*

Now if you will consider what the other grievances are that they suffer from, you will yourselves see that it is not possible for them, the Indian community, harassed, beggared and exhausted as it is today, to fight for free immigration when they are suffering intolerable wrongs in other respects We have been talking of equal citizenship in the Empire, and it is said if there is no free immigration, there is no equal citizenship Well, my friends there is no equal citizenship in several matters even in this country so that if there is no equal citizenship in regard to immigration that will not be your only grievance But the question of equal or free citizenship is involved more in other questions than in this question of immigration Roughly you may say this, that if we were absolutely equal subjects of the King, we should in the first place be able to go to South Africa on the same terms as the Europeans and secondly, when we are there, we should be able to live in that country on the same terms as the Europeans That also involves the question of free and equal British citizenship Now this second equality, if I may call it so, may be analysed under eight or nine heads It means that if we were equal subjects of the King in South Africa when we go there and settle there, we should be able first of all to leave the country temporarily when we want to leave it and go back to it when we want without hindrance or trouble or difficulty An Indian who wants to go to India and come back should experience no more difficulty than an English-

man experiences every time he goes to England and comes back. Secondly, no Indian who is in South Africa should have any difficulty in moving about from one province to another, for instance, from the Cape to the Transvaal and from the Transvaal to Orangia without trouble. Thirdly, an Indian should be at liberty to reside where he likes, in whatever quarter of the town he pleases, provided he is able to live in the style which is the common style of that quarter. Fourthly, an Indian should be able to acquire and own land and other permanent property. Fifthly, an Indian should be able to trade and follow any other avocation such as any European does — trade on equal terms. Sixthly, an Indian should be able to provide for his children the same sort of education that Europeans are enabled by the State to provide for their children. Seventhly, an Indian should be free from those special disabilities and burdens which the rest of the community has not got to bear. Eighthly, Government service should be open to Indians just as it is to Europeans. And ninthly and lastly, the franchise should be available to Indians; and public careers, careers in public life, in Parliament, in Municipalities and in all these places should be available to the Indians. If the Indians were the equal subjects of the King, if the Indians who have gone there and settled were the equal subjects of the King, they should be the equals of Europeans in these matters.

I have left out of account those disabilities which I might call social disabilities — people not being allowed to attend theatres and to stay in hotels, their not being allowed to sit on benches in parks their not being allowed to walk on the footpaths, etc. Some of these have a public aspect, because where the property is municipal property, our people have a legitimate grievance inasmuch as they pay taxes to the Municipality; but these are more or less social disabilities and for the moment I leave them aside; but really speaking, they should not have existed if we were the equal subjects of the King and if we were treated on terms of equality with Europeans in that sub-continent. In each one of these nine respects, our people have been suffering not only hardships but intolerable hardships for the last twenty years and more in one part or another. The Indian community of South Africa has been carrying on sometimes a hopeless and sometimes a more hopeful struggle but a fierce struggle all along under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi in order to get rid of these disabilities. Where people are labouring under these difficulties, where they have to pay taxes to one of which only I refer, a tax absolutely monstrous, where if they cannot pay the tax they must reside at distances of three, four or five miles from the town, where they cannot trade without a licence — a licence may be withdrawn for any reason — and where they cannot move from one province to another and where they cannot have education for their children, do you expect a community suffering all these intolerable hardships to put up with all these hardships and direct what little energy it has to get the doors of South Africa thrown open to the people of this country for free immigration? They do not object to more Indians coming there. It is all the better for them, because they will feel stronger in the struggle they are making. It is a disability



resting upon you if you are not allowed to go there. Start a dignified agitation if you have the stuff in you, go about the country, make the kind of sacrifices that Mr. Gandhi and others have made and then insist upon free immigration into South Africa. It is all very well to sit at home and criticize men like Mr. Gandhi. God knows that most of us are poor enough clay, and when once in a way a man rises amongst us, here we are sitting quiet at home and criticizing him and tearing him to pieces in the manner that some of us are doing. Ladies and gentlemen, therefore you will see that Mr. Gandhi and those who are acting with him are absolutely right in the line that they have adopted and that those who criticize them here if they were there will not do anything else. The energies of the South African Indian community are therefore directed today towards securing the redress of these nine grievances. I will just say a word or two with regard to each one of them.

### *Indian Community Driven to Despair*

First is the permission to leave the country and go back when they want. This is what is known as the working of the Immigration Law. The Immigration Law itself applies only to those who go there for the first time, not those who are already there. If they want to leave the country and come back again, because they are settlers in the country, the thing ought to be made as easy for them as possible. Yet things are today made in South Africa as hard, as difficult, and as monstrously difficult, as possible for these people. I have given one or two instances in the speech that I made in Bombay, but I think I had better mention them to you here because they will give you an idea of what things are happening there to your countrymen. In Cape Colony — this is the most liberal colony in the four provinces — the Indian who wants to get out of the country must take out a permit with him which specifies the period within which he should return. He takes out the permit and goes away. He must come back within the time of that permit according to the law. But the law vests a great deal of discretion in the executive officer, the Immigration Officer. Just about the time I arrived there, a case occurred which drew pointed attention to this law. It is only typical of the many cases that have been happening. A man had come back to India, because his brothers or sisters were ill and he took a year's permit and came to India. He himself fell ill. He had left his wife and children there to look after his business. He started back from India in time to go back to South Africa and if the steamer had run according to the scheduled time he would have gone there three days before the time. But the steamer was unfortunately held up by a storm for four days and the man returned one day late and the Immigration Officer, exercising the letter of the law and not the spirit, turned him back though everything was clear that the man was not to blame. What does this mean? It means absolute ruin to the man, his wife and his children must come back and the shop had to be closed as nobody else could conduct it, no new licences being granted to Indians. Another man could not be put in charge of it and all the goods had to be sold

at secondhand rates and the man must come back to India after so many years' stay there. It is these things that are driving the Indian community there to madness and not the restriction on the free immigration of Indians into South Africa. Of course that is felt as a hardship, but it is like many other hardships with which we have to put up in this country, such as the Arms Act and the denial of careers in the army and many others under which we live. So also they accept the restriction of immigration up to a certain point as unavoidable.

In Natal and Cape Colony another thing has been happening. That is not the law there. These are the two forward Provinces — Natal and Cape Colony. The Transvaal and Orangia are admittedly most anti-Asiatic and most bigoted. In Natal domicile certificates are granted to those who have been there for a certain time. It is understood that the domicile certificate gives you a right to go out of the country and come back to it whenever you choose; but only in order to prevent fraud and in order to see to it that one man does not go out and another man come back, the Immigration Officer has the power to cross-examine the holder of the certificate. Well, things have gone on without much trouble till very recently. But now the Immigration Officer, in order to exercise his discretion as harshly as possible, cross-examined a man as to the minutest particulars in his life, as to when he went to the Colony first. Every man's name is registered; every man's address is registered; his movements are registered. The man who has been there for fifteen or sixteen years goes back with his certificate with him feeling confident that there will be no trouble. But he is suddenly asked when he went to the Colony first, in what street he lived, what business he did, how much business he did in the first year and so on and if there is the smallest discrepancy between the answer he gives and what is recorded, the man is told that the certificate is a fraud and he will not be admitted. I ask you, how many of you can answer if you are suddenly asked where you were this day last week? What will you do if you are suddenly asked this question? If such questions are put after an interval of fifteen or sixteen years, how are these poor innocent people to answer these questions? This it is which is driving the Indian community in Natal to despair, just as the operation of a similar law in Cape Colony is driving them to despair.

#### *Permits Even for Movement inside the Country*

Well, this is the first. The second is the permission to move about in the country itself. Gentlemen, you know South Africa is a united country; and in that united country a man cannot cross the border from Transvaal to Orangia, a man cannot go from Cape Colony to Natal without passing an examination. Under no circumstances can a man go from Orangia to the Transvaal without passing an examination. A man may have his principal business in Durban and a branch in Johannesburg. He cannot go to the branch without a permit. All these restrictions are most harassing. They make the life of the Indian community a perpetual torture.

*Locations and Gold Laws*

The third is residing where they like. In Transvaal there is a law which condemns all Indians to locations, but our men have been successfully avoiding this law, because the authorities have no other course and there is no penalty provided for this and no sanction. Therefore they have been defying the law. Another law has been since enacted, the Gold Law. If gold is found in any area it is proclaimed as a gold area and the Indians must then reside in locations, otherwise special penalties are provided. The whole of the Transvaal is full of gold, and therefore the whole of the Transvaal has been declared to be a gold area and as soon as it is declared a gold area the best of you must give up your houses and go and live in locations 3, 4, or 5 miles from the town and do your business from there if you care for it, or if not get out of the country. Well, this is another hardship which naturally the higher class of people feel most — to be condemned to live like that.

*Ban on Indians Acquiring Property*

Then, again, there is the question of acquiring land and other properties in the Transvaal. You cannot acquire land, you cannot acquire houses, you cannot build houses because you can acquire land only on less than ten years' lease and no body would build a house on a land the lease of which might be over in ten years. In Orania you cannot do even that. You cannot be a tenant or a farmer, leave alone the owning of land.

*Ban on Indian Trade*

Well, then again, as regards trade and other avocations, the situation has become so critical that it is the issue on which the greatest fight will have to be waged and unless we help the Indian community solidly from here I fear the Indian community there will go to the wall. This is really a question which affects the more substantial Indians in that country and involves property worth lakhs and lakhs of rupees. Both in Cape Colony and Natal licences for trade have to be renewed every year. Now these licences are granted by the local authorities. These local bodies are manned by men who are the rivals of the Indian traders, they are the small European traders. Most of them have a seat in the Municipality and their interest is to extinguish the Indians because they cannot stand Indian competition. The scale of expenditure of an Indian is less, and he easily beats his European competitor in the market. Therefore the European does not want the Indian there. Under one pretext or another, the licences of respectable people are being extinguished. The new policy is not to grant any new licences. What are the children of the community to do if no new licences are to be granted? The licences are steadily withdrawn. If in parts of the country they cannot have land, cannot enter Government service, if they cannot trade or follow other avocations, what are the people to do? The policy of the Colonies is to harass the people in such a way that they would of their own accord leave the country. That is the position.

*No Education for Indian Children*

Then, there is no provision for the education of the children anywhere. There is just a little provision made by the missionaries and there are a few schools, primary schools, started by our own community. Throughout South Africa there is not a single secondary school, and not a single school for technical instruction, leave alone any institution for higher education. These children are growing up in ignorance and darkness and the moral helplessness which comes out of ignorance and darkness. I may mention that one reason why the Government is not inclined to give education to the children is that if they are educated they will demand the franchise later on. I said to the ministers when I met them that the Indian community did not raise the question of franchise, but that did not mean that they gave it up. They do not raise it now, today, just as they do not raise the question of Government service, because it is hopeless, and just as they left the question of immigration at a particular stage because anything further is hopeless. They put it on a level with the admission of the Indians into the Government service or with Indians being allowed the franchise. But because the Government thinks that if the children of the Indians are educated they will demand the franchise, therefore they are withholding educational facilities from them. Therefore our people must agitate. The South African Indian community must agitate there, and we must back them from here in order that they may be able to provide educational facilities for their children. If the State does not do its duty in the matter, we must help them; they are our own kith and kin, we must supply them with funds so as to enable them to do their duty by their children.

*Monstrous £3 Poll Tax*

Well, this is the sixth. Then there is the freedom from special disabilities and burdens. If we were the equals of Europeans we should be free, as free as they are, from these special disabilities and burdens. I have spoken of social disabilities and burdens. I will mention one burden which in some respects is the most monstrous burden anywhere imposed by any Government on any people. That is what is known as the three pounds licence or three pounds tax. Ladies and gentlemen, I have seen some comments in this hall on the three pounds licence which show that those who pass such comments do not realize what miseries are caused by this three pounds licence tax to many of our countrymen in that land. Well, the three pounds licence tax is a tax which every Indian who goes there as an indentured labourer or his descendant must pay every year for mere permission to live in that Colony. The tax has to be paid for every male above 17 and every female above 13. And the man of 17 or the woman or girl of 13 is liable to be sentenced to hard labour if he or she does not pay the three pounds every year to the State. This has to be paid not by the richer classes who can easily pay the three pounds, but by the labouring classes. Take an average family consisting of a father and a mother with

two girls of 13 and 15, an illustration which I have taken because I have actually seen a case like this. A father, a mother with two daughters, 13 and 15 and smaller children for whom nothing has to be paid. For these four persons, at the rate of 3 pounds for each, they have to pay 12 pounds a year or £1 a month. The average wage of a man in that country is 25 shillings a month. A woman with two daughters can add 15 shillings more to it by doing work after the household work. Altogether it comes up to two pounds a month. Out of the total income per month, one pound every month must be given for mere permission to live in the Colony, — and this is after five years' work in the Colony as indentured labourers by the father and the mother, — for the prosperity of the Colony. Two pounds is Rs. 30 Just fancy an income-tax of eight annas in the rupee on all persons who get an income of Rs. 30 a month ! That is what it means. If you can realize that, then you will see how strongly the grievances are felt.

At the present moment there are 20,000 Indians in South Africa — that is the estimate which Mr. Gandhi makes — who are liable to pay this tax of three pounds. Not more than 5,000 or 6,000 are able to pay it with the utmost difficulty. It is extremely difficult for these poor people to pay. One leading member of the Natal legislature who at one time acted as a Prime Minister stated two years ago in the Natal legislature that the tax was a monstrous tax and broke up families and drove the men into paths of crime and the women to a life of shame! That is what has been happening to your own people there. There are 20,000 people who are liable to pay this tax. Only about 5,000 or 6,000 pay it with the utmost difficulty. That is bad enough, but the condition of the remaining 14,000 or 15,000 is worse. They live in mortal dread of the Police. They do not know when they will be arrested and placed before the Magistrate for non-payment of the tax. Whatever they can scrape up they pay to the Police, or are in hiding. Just imagine what this means. The whole community consists of 150,000, of whom 120,000 are in Natal, 20,000 of them are in this State and 40,000 more are serving under indentures; and when their indentures are completed they will have to be in the same State. Is this a small matter — a matter for you to consider small?

I remember that one of the most pathetic and heart-rendering sights at which I was present was at a meeting of the three pounds tax-payers. Five thousand persons attended that meeting. One man whose heart had been broken, and who had lost everything, had grown crazy. He merely writes verses about the three pounds tax, goes to jail when the Police catch him and when he is out of it he goes about the country and merely writes verses about the three pounds tax, or sings them. He has grown quite crazy. A woman — I was told she was from this Province, from Arrah, she was about 65 years of age, I remember the sight and I cannot recall that sight without emotion even now — came and told us that she had been six times in jail — a woman of 65. You will really see how grave the misery is that these people are suffering from this three pounds tax.

*Government Service Closed to Indians*

Then, the next question is Government service. This Government service is closed to us Indians, all over the country. In no Colony can Indians enter Government service. One or two Parsees in some way or other entered the Postal department. They too have been chucked out. No Indian can now enter Government service. Just fancy what that would mean here; and then you will see whether the immigration question is more important or the question of entering Government service. But there the people do not feel this so much because there are so few educated people there. The people are denied education and the few educated people that are there do not care much for Government service. But the community, every member of which is excluded from the Government service, must remain in a depressed state.

*No Political Franchise for Indians*

Lastly, the franchise. In Cape Colony our people have a little franchise. Political franchise they enjoy and Municipal franchise they enjoy. I have stated that there are few educated people and they do not care for the political franchise. They do not come and register. In Natal they enjoy Municipal franchise; but they do not enjoy political franchise, though it appears they enjoyed it before 1893. In the Transvaal and Orangia there is no political franchise not only now but the determination of the authorities is not to grant the franchise as long as they can. So we have no political franchise there and of course Indians cannot have any careers in public life.

These are the hardships which our countrymen in that country are enduring; these are the hardships against which they are struggling. They do not expect that these hardships would be removed at once. Men who have sacrificed their all in the cause of the passive resistance struggle — property worth 40 and 50 lakhs has been sacrificed by our people — men who had once been wealthy have become paupers; and for a time they used to go about with bundles of cloth on their heads, selling them and earning their livelihood like that. These people who have made these sacrifices are under no delusion. Mr. Gandhi is under no delusion and the others are under no delusion. They know, they realize, that the struggle before them is a long and weary struggle; but they are not faint-hearted. They are going on with their struggle.

A question has been asked in this country, "Mr. Gokhale has been there. What has he been able to do?" My friends, we have been in the habit of sending deputations to England. Do you expect a single deputation to England to achieve everything at once? This agitation cannot be regarded in that way. You must knock and knock till it is opened. Even if it is not opened it is your duty to go on knocking till it is opened. It is only those friends who are extremely simple in public life who can expect such results. What is the visit of one man or even of a hundred men, when you consider the catalogue of the grievances of our Indian brethren in South Africa? They themselves are going on

with the struggle and I want the people in this country to help them in the struggle they are carrying on. I have referred to the criticism and I leave it to the Congress to judge of Mr Gandhi and those working with him. I only worked under his guidance. He has borne the brunt of the sufferings and made all sacrifices. My privilege has been to stand by his side for a little while because he invited me to come there and to give a little assistance in his work because he asked me for it, and my highest reward is that he is satisfied with my visit so far. But Mr Gandhi is under no delusion and I want you to consider and to judge now whether he can still fight this question of immigration or whether he is wise in directing all his energies towards these other grievances that I have spoken of. I am sure your judgment will be right and I am sure that those who have criticised us, friends and workers as they are, they themselves will see the necessity of revising their judgment and they will even regret, I am sure, that they did not wait till my return before expressing their judgment emphatically.

### *Appeal for Financial Support*

Now, ladies and gentlemen, one word more — and my last word, is this, the struggle is, as I have said, a long and weary struggle. The men who are engaged in it know how long, weary and bitter it is to be, but as I have said, they are determined to go on with it. Only remember that the community there is an exhausted community, it has already made tremendous sacrifices. The other day I happened to say in Bombay that we in this country have not done our duty in this matter. A friend of mine for whom I have great respect said he could not understand this statement because he said "we held several meetings." That shows how inadequate is our conception of the needs of the people and of what we have to do in this matter. You may hold ever so many meetings. It does not matter to them. If you hold meetings and send them your sympathies of course that is something. That is better than doing nothing. But what they want is financial assistance. First and foremost, secondly, steady and continuous pressure on your own Government from year to year, from month to month, from week to week and from day to day. The Government must be given no rest till the grievances of your countrymen in South Africa are remedied. By holding occasional meetings our duty in this matter is not discharged. And after all how much money has been sent? As I have said, a small community has lost about forty or fifty lakhs in the course of the struggle. That is the lowest estimate, some place it is even higher. But how much have you sent altogether from this country? Altogether about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs during the last three years and out of this  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs about Rs 75,000 was given by one man, Mr Ratan Tata.<sup>1</sup> The whole country consisting of 300 millions contributed in aid of this struggle only Rs 75,000 while 40 or 50 lakhs have been lost by these unfortunate individuals struggling against these overwhelming disabilities,

<sup>1</sup> See foot-note on p 417

and I therefore leave it to you to consider whether there is or is not room for you to do more for these people. I earnestly hope you will do your best. However remiss we may have been in the past, I earnestly hope that we shall do our duty better in the future, because, after all though the question concerns only South African Indians, our own status in the Empire is really involved in this struggle; and if we care for our status we must be solidly behind our Indian brethren in South Africa; else we shall deserve nothing better than what is befalling them there. With these words I commend the resolution to your acceptance.



## THE GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION

The following is a copy of the letter addressed to Mr Gokhale, by the Hon Mr Fischer, Minister of the Interior, on behalf of the Union Government .

Sir,

I am desired on behalf of the Government, to extend to you their welcome on your arrival in the Union of South Africa

This letter will be handed to you by Mr Runciman of the Government's Immigration Staff, who has been specially deputed by the Government to meet and receive you at the Cape Town Docks, and who has instructions to place himself at your disposal on your journey through the Union

I trust that the arrangements that have been made by the Government for your comfort and entertainment during the period of your stay in the Union will meet with your approval

I understand that the Indian community in this country has made special arrangements in the direction of receiving you, and entertaining you during your stay, but the Government would be pleased if you would be good enough to accept their hospitality during your stay at Pretoria, the seat of the Government of the Union I should be glad if you would be good enough to indicate your wishes in that direction to Mr Runciman and ask him to communicate them by wire to me so that I can have the necessary arrangements made for your accommodation here

Trusting that your visit to the Union will be an enjoyable one, yours etc

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Trusting that your visit to the Union will be an enjoyable one, yours etc

# DIARY OF GOKHALE'S TOUR

1912

- Oct. 22. — Arrived Cape Town. Met Mr. Runciman on board with letter from Hon. Mr. Fischer.  
Procession from the Wharf to "Noorbagh," 8, Kloof Street.  
Met Mr. Cartwright, M.P.C., and Sir Frederic Smith, Deputy Mayor.  
Reception at the City Hall, 8 p. m. Mayor in the chair Present : The Hon W. P. Schreiner, Sir Frederic Smith, Dr. Abdurahman, Mr M. Alexander, M.L.A., Mrs. Alexander, Miss Molteno, Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Abdurahman. Speakers : The Hon. W. P. Schreiner, Mr Gandhi, Dr Abdurahman, Dr. Gool.  
Addresses from the Indian community, the Hindu Association, the Tamil Association, and the Cape Konkni Moslem League.
- Oct 23. — Justices Sir James Rose-Innes and Solomon left cards. Interviews with the Hon. W. P. Schreiner and Sir Frederic Smith  
8 p.m. : Met the Reception Committee, discussion of grievances.
- Oct. 24. — Interview with the Right Hon John X Merriman at the Civil Service Club. Departure for Kimberley by special saloon, 11.30 a. m Sir Frederic Smith, etc., at station.  
Deputation of Indians at Wellington.
- Oct 25. — Deputation of Indians at De Aar. Met Mrs. Cronwright-Schreiner (Olive Schreiner). Special train from Kimberley met train at Modder River with about 200 Indians. Reception at Beaconsfield by the Mayor and others. Reached Kimberley 5.30 p.m. Received by the Mayor, Major Browning, Mr. Oats (De Beers).  
Driven in procession to Mr. V. Samy's house. Reception at the Town Hall at 8.15 p.m, the Mayor, Mr. Gasson, presiding. Among the Europeans present were Councillor J. Orr, Mr. J. W. Williams (Postmaster), Mr. Runciman, Mr. Francis Oats, Mr. I. R. Grimmer, Mr. Sagar, Mr. L. Tindall, Mr. D. S. Blacklaws, Mr. C. Schouw, Major Browning, Mr. Denoon Duncan, Rev. W. Prescott. Speech of welcome by the Mayor. Presentation of address, read by Mr. Dawson. Speeches by Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Isaac Joshua, Chairman of the local branch of the African Political Organisation.
- Oct. 26. — Visit to the Mines. Mr. J. McLaren called to state the grievances of the Indians in Bloemfontein. Mr. Oliver, M.L.A., called Banquet at the Supper Room, City Hall, at 8.45 p.m., the Mayor of Beaconsfield in the chair. About 150 were present, including 40 Europeans, mostly leading men of Kimberley. Among them were the Mayor of Kimberley. Mr. Oliver, M.L.A., Mr. Oats and others. Speeches by the Mayor of Kimberley, Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Oats.
- Oct. 27. — Interview with Mr. Oliver, 2 p. m. Purely Indian reception at the Constantia Hall. Left Kimberley for Johannesburg, 6 p. m.  
Presentation of address at Windsorton.  
Addresses Christiana and Bloemhof. Leading Europeans present at all these places.
- Oct. 28. — Met at Klerksdorp by special train from Johannesburg, carrying over 200 passengers. Klerksdorp Station decorated. Reception at the Klerksdorp Exchange Hall, the Mayor, Mr. A. Bramley, presiding, at 6-30 a.m. Present: Mr. Naser, M.L.A., and over 100 other Europeans. Statement of grievances by British Indians. Potchefstroom reached 8.30 a.m. Reception and presentation of addresses at the Town Gardens. Station decorated. Received at station by the Mayor, Mr. M. A. Goetz, Mr. B. D. Pienaar, M.P.C., the Resident Magistrate and others. Drive to the Government Experimental farm. Left Potchefstroom at 10-40 a.m.

- Reached Krugersdorp, 2 p m Station decorated Received by Mr L Bangley, R M, the Mayor, Mr Godley, Mr Hitchins, Mr Steeval, Mr P B du Toit and others Presentation of address at Station Drive to the Indian Location, Burghersdorp Left Krugersdorp
- Reached Johannesburg (Park), 4 p m Received by a gathering numbering over 3 000 The Mayor, Mr Ellis, Rev J J Doke, Rev Philips, Mr Hosken, Dr Ross, Sir George Albu, etc on the platform
- Presentation of addresses — British Indian Association, engraved on massive gold plate, Johannesburg Hindus, Hamidia Islamic Society, The Tamil Benefit Society, Patidar Association, Cradock Indians and Pietersburg Indians
- Oct 29 —Attended at the Offices Reception at the Carlton Hotel by European Committee, 8 15 p m
- Oct 30 —Messrs Munro, Wybergh, Creswell, M.L.A.'s, Robinson (Mines), Portuguese Consul called Interviewed Parsee deputation Conference at Mr Hosken's house, 3 30 p m Present Mr W Hosken, Mr Chaplin, Mr Doke, Mr Gandhi, Mr Phillips, Mr David Pollock, Mr Ritch, Mr Berry, Mr Pim, Mr Kallenbach
- Oct 31 —Banquet at the Masonic Hall the Mayor, Mr Ellis presiding
- Nov 1 —Attended at Offices, Chudleigh's Buildings Interviewed Pathan Deputation, Essop Mia Deputation, Habib Motan Deputation, Merchants' Deputation Reception by the Transvaal Women's Association at the Independent Schoolroom, 3 30 p m Presentation of address, etc Purely Indian Meeting at Drill Hall, 5 p m
- Nov 2 —Left for Lawley
- Nov 3 —Tolstoy Farm
- Nov 4 —Tolstoy Farm
- Nov 5 —Returned to Johannesburg from Lawley, 7 15 a m Tea at Mr Drummond Chaplin's, where met Sir Percy Fitzpatrick
- Nov 6 —Motored to Germiston and Boksburg Locations 8 a m Called on Mr Ellis Left for Natal 8 p m
- Nov 7 —Address presented at Newcastle Received people at Ladysmith Reception at Maritzburg Town Hall
- Nov 8 —Discussion of grievances at the Schoolroom, Maritzburg Left cards Administrator, Mayor Interviewed Mr Wynne Cole, licensing officer Luncheon at Camden Hotel Special train arrived from Durban, bearing Mr Omar and others Left by Special for Durban Reception at Durban Station Mayor, Chief Magistrate and others present Procession to Mr Moosa's house Carriage unhorsed Reception at the Town Hall, at 8 p m, Mayor presiding
- Nov 9 —Children's Sports Left cards Sir David Hunter and Mayor Received Merchants' Deputation Attended the Oval, Albert Park, distributed children's prizes
- Nov 10 —Visited Lord's Heard grievances of £3 taxpayers Afternoon Went by Special Train to Isipingo, returning 5 o'clock Motored to Phoenix
- Nov 11 —Returned to Durban Banquet 8 15 p m Drill Hall, Sir David Hunter presiding
- Nov 12 —Visited Sydenham College Met Chamber of Commerce Visited Mount Edgecombe, where met indentured Indians Met Mr Maurice Evans Attended Reception to Mr Rustumjee Left for Pretoria
- Nov 13 —Addresses presented Volksrust, Standerton and Heidelberg. At last two places Mayors and other prominent Europeans attended.

- Reached Pretoria 7-30 p.m. Reception at Station, Mr. Findlay, Deputy Mayor,  
 Mr. Chamney, Mr. Fischer's Secretary, attending.
- Nov. 14.—11 a.m., Interview with Ministers—General Botha, General Smuts, Mr. Fischer.  
 Hon. Mr. Leuchars left his card. Attended at offices. Left cards Ministers. General  
 Botha and Mayor left cards.  
*Reception at Town Hall 8-30 p.m., Deputy Mayor, Mr. Findlay presiding.*
- Nov. 15.—Motored Johannesburg to call on Mr. Wyndham, M.L.A., 9-30 a.m.  
 Returned Pretoria. Lunched with Lord Gladstone.  
 Left by 3-7 p.m. for Lawley.
- Nov. 16.—Tolstoy Farm.
- Nov. 17.—Called on Sir Thomas Smartt at Mr. Chaplin's house.  
 Called on Imam A. K. Bawazeer, Chairman, Hamidia Islamic Society, Jiwan Premji,  
 Chairman, Patidar Association, and Mr. Phillips.  
 Left for Lourenco Marques 8-45 p.m.

## INDEX

# INDEX

- Adamson, Sir Harvey · 18*n*, 19, 26, 31, 38  
*Advocate of India* 245  
Aga Khan · 311*n*, 313, 409  
Agriculture in India · 229-30  
Ain-i-Akbar 229  
Aitchison, Sir Charles · 82*n*, 146*n*  
Akbar, time of, 229  
Ali Imam · 56, 83*n*  
Amphill, Lord 413*n*, 422  
Argyll, Duke of 151*n*  
Arundel, Sir Arundel · 5, 8*n*, 10, 305  
Australia, Indian immigrants disallowed, 458  
Ayerst, Lieut 162
- Baker, Sir Edward Norman : 72, 302*n*, 303  
Banerjee, Surendra Nath : 249, 250, 358*n*, 360, 367  
Bannerji, Sir Gurudas 192  
Barbour, Sir David 190  
Barisal, incidents at, 359 61, 364-7  
Baroda, education in, 387  
Basu, Bhupendra Nath · 41*n*, 66*n*, 68*n*, 360, resolution on police administration, 109  
Baumann 141  
Bengal, agitation in, 24 5, 321; partition of, 34-6, 191-5, 322-4, 330-1, 336-7, 365, 371, 374, boycott movement in, 210-1, 324-5, deputation to Viceroy 304, *see also* Eastern Bengal and Assam  
Bentinck, Lord William Cavendish 369*n*  
Besant, Mrs Annie : 72*n*  
Bezant : 197  
Bhownagree, Sir Mancherjee : 389*n*  
Bill, controversial, introduction at Simla, criticized 18  
Birtwell, Dr · 402  
Boer Government · 410-1, 418, 419, 421-2, 445, 447  
Boer war : 410, 418-9  
Bombay Municipal Corporation, protest against the caucus formed to prevent Sir Pherozshah's election to, 236-41  
Bombay Presidency Association, *see* Presidency Association, Bombay  
Bombay Time vs Standard Time controversy, 238 9  
Bose, Bhupendra Nath, *see* Basu Bhupendra Nath  
Bose, Sir Bipin Krishna 9*n*  
Bose, Sir J C 35*n*  
Botha General 436, 443 452, 455  
Boycott movement 324 5, should be confined to Bengal only, 210-1, 249, implied a vindictive desire, 220, 234, political boycott, a preposterous thing, 221, *see also* Swadeshi movement  
Bradlaugh, Charles 140*n*, 143, 293, 370  
Bright 293, 370  
British Committee, work in England appreciated, 291-2  
British empire, question of equal citizenship to Indians in, 414-6, 423, 429-30, 453, 456-62  
British Indian Association, Johannesburg 426*n*  
British rule in India · 53, 70, 341-3, 380-8; must be continuously progressive, 80-1, must associate Indians with the administration, 106, 331-2, evils of, 339, 344, faith in, shaken, 350-2, 376, higher purpose of, 372-3  
Brodrick 194*n*, 323  
Bryce, James 141*n*  
Bureaucracy 204-6, wrong notions of efficiency; 337 8, 353, *see also* Indian Civil Service  
Burke, Edmund · 171, 208
- Caine, William Sproston : 152*n*  
Caird, Sir James 345  
Calcutta, effect of partition of Bengal on, 324  
Cameron, Dr : 140-1  
Campbell, Sir C. : 141  
Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry 208*n*; quoted, 353  
Canada, Indian immigrants disallowed, 458



# INDEX

- Adamson, Sir Harvey : 18*n*, 19, 26, 31, 38  
*Advocate of India* 245  
Aga Khan : 311*n*, 313, 409  
Agriculture in India : 229-30  
Ain-i-Akbar . 229  
Aitchison, Sir Charles : 82*n*, 146*n*  
Akbar, time of, 229  
Ali Imam : 56, 83*n*  
Amphill, Lord : 413*n*, 422  
Argyll, Duke of : 151*n*  
Arundel, Sir Arundel : 5, 8*n*, 10, 305  
Australia, Indian immigrants disallowed, 458  
Ayerst, Lieut : 162  
Baker, Sir Edward Norman : 72, 302*n*, 303  
Banerjee, Surendra Nath : 249, 250, 358*n*, 360, 367  
Bannerji, Sir Gurudas 192  
Barbour, Sir David 190  
Barisal, incidents at, 359-61, 364-7  
Baroda, education in, 387  
Basu, Bhupendra Nath . 41*n*, 66*n*, 68*n*, 360, resolution on police administration, 109  
Baumann : 141  
Bengal, agitation in, 24-5, 321; partition of, 34-6, 191-5, 322-4, 330-1, 336-7, 365, 371, 374; boycott movement in, 210-1, 324-5; deputation to Viceroy 304, *see also* Eastern Bengal and Assam  
Bentinck, Lord William Cavendish : 369*n*  
Besant, Mrs Annie . 72*n*  
Bezanji : 197  
Bhownaggee, Sir Mancherjee : 389*n*  
Bill, controversial, introduction at Simla, criticized, 18  
Birtwell, Dr : 402  
Boer Government : 410-1, 418, 419, 421-2, 445, 447  
Boer war : 410, 418-9  
Bombay Municipal Corporation, protest against the caucus formed to prevent Sir Pherozshah's election to, 236-41  
Bombay Presidency Association, *see* Presidency Association, Bombay  
Bombay Time vs Standard Time controversy, 238-9  
Bose, Bhupendra Nath, *see* Basu, Bhupendra Nath  
Bose, Sir Bipin Krishna 9*n*  
Bose, Sir J C 35*n*  
Botha General 436, 443, 452, 455  
Boycott movement 324-5, should be confined to Bengal only, 210-1, 249, implied a vindictive desire, 220, 234, political boycott, a preposterous thing, 221, *see also* Swadeshi movement  
Bradlaugh, Charles . 140*n*, 143, 293, 370  
Bright . 293, 370  
British Committee, work in England appreciated, 291-2  
British empire, question of equal citizenship to Indians in, 414-6, 423, 429-30, 453, 456-62  
British Indian Association, Johannesburg : 426*n*  
British rule in India : 53, 70, 341-3, 380-8; must be continuously progressive, 80-1; must associate Indians with the administration, 106, 331-2; evils of, 339, 344, faith in, shaken, 350-2, 376; higher purpose of, 372-3  
Brodrick 194*n*, 323  
Bryce, James . 141*n*  
Bureaucracy . 204-6, wrong notions of efficiency; 337-8, 353, *see also* Indian Civil Service  
Burke, Edmund 171, 208  
Caine, William Sproston : 152*n*  
Caird, Sir James : 345  
Calcutta, effect of partition of Bengal on, 324  
Cameron, Dr. : 140-1  
Campbell, Sir C. : 141  
Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry : 208*n*; quoted, 353  
Canada, Indian immigrants disallowed, 458

- Canning, Lord : 375  
 Cape Colony, treatment given to Indians in, 437, 445-8, 456-7, 463-5, 468  
 Carlyle : 85*n*  
 Ceylon, ties with India, 358  
 Chamberlain, Joseph : 238, 400, 410, 418  
 Chandavarkar, Sir Narayan Ganesh : 114*n*  
 Charter Act, 1833 : 203, 341, 350, 352-3, 369, 373  
 Chatterton : 200  
 Chhatre, S. A. : 131  
 Chintamani, Sir C. Y. : 70*n*; statement on Gokhale's attitude towards the Press Bill, 1910, 71-3  
 Chitnavis, Sir Gangadhar : 91*n*, 101, 111  
 Chowbal case : 141  
 Chowdhury : 177  
 Churchill (of Bangalore) : 200  
*Civil and Military Gazette* : 25, 34, 37  
 Civil Service, 'standing conservative party in Indian administration' 98; *see also* Public Service  
 Clarke, Sir George Sydenham : 52*n*  
 Constitutional reforms : 356, 374-5; Morley-Minto Reforms, a note, 287-90; assessment of, 291-9, 376-9; memorandum on, 300-3; letter to the London *Times*, 301-6; post-war reform scheme, 313-7  
*Contemporary Review* : 376*n*  
 Cotton, Sir Henry John Stedman : 193, 292, 323, 333  
 Council regulations : 76-9; *see also* Provincial Councils  
 Craddock, Sir Reginald : 100*n*, 103, 105  
 Crawford, Arthur Traverse, bribery case, misrepresentation in the British press protested, 137-42  
 Crewe, Lord : 391*n*, 392, 422, 442  
 Criminal Tribes Bill, 1911 : 75  
 Cross, Lord : 151*n*  
 Crosthwaite, R. J. : 137*n*  
 Currimbhoy Ibrahim, Sir : 409  
 Curzon, Lord : 16*n*, 24, 229, 238, 328, 370, 373, 415; policy of, 188-95, 216, 323, 329-30, 334-7, 343, 353-4, 365, 370-1; compared to Aurangzeb, 188; speech at the Byculla Club, Bombay, 189-90; disparaging remarks on the Bengalees, 324  
 Dadabhai Naoroji : 82*n*, 146, 150, 157*n*, 210*n*, 247, 291, 364*n*, 445  
*Daily News* : 364, 367  
 De Free, Colonel, quoted, 87  
 Deccan Sabha : 160, 164  
 Decentralization Commission, *see* Royal Commission on Decentralization, 1907  
 Defence, land in the vicinity of works of, to be kept free from buildings, etc., 3-4  
 Desai : 114  
 Devadhar, Gopal Krishna : 181*n*, 182*n*  
 Dilke, Sir Charles : 153*n*  
 District administration : 289-90, 316-7  
 District Advisory Councils : 52, 207, 255-6, 260-3, resolution on, 88-108; constitution of, 93-5; Prussian analogy, 94-5; collector's functions, 95-7; evidence before Decentralization Commission analysed, 97-8; objections considered, 98-100; helpful for administrative efficiency, 101, non-official association with the administration essential, 103, 105, 107; abolition of divisional commissionerships, 104-6; punitive police system, 106-7  
 District Boards : 259-60  
 District Police Act, 1890, amendment suggested, 121-3  
 Dixit : 237  
 'Drain' of wealth from India to England : 227-9  
 Dravid, Natesh Appaji : 181*n*, 182*n*  
 Dufferin and Ava, Marquis of : 33*n*, 151*n*  
 Duncan : 432-4  
 Dunlop-Smith : 71  
 Dutt, Ashwini Kumar : 246  
 Dutt, R. C. : 264*n*, 270  
 Earle, Sir Archdale : 41*n*  
 East India Association, London : 350, 357  
 East India Company : 369; policy of, 226  
 East India Finance Committee, 1874 : 149  
 Eastern Bengal and Assam, situation in, 358-67  
 Edgerley, Sir Steyning : 264*n*, 281  
 Educated classes in India, 23, 342, 351-2, 355, 370-2  
 Education, national, 249; neglected under British rule, 355, 387-8

- Efficiency in administration, *see under*  
Bureaucracy
- Electorates, scheme for special electorates  
for Mahomedans and landlords up-  
held, 76-9
- Elgin, Lord : 33*n*, 370
- Elles, Sir Edmond : 3, 8
- Elliot, Sir Charles : 346*n*
- Ellis, J. E. : 208, 368
- Emerson : 367
- Englishman*, views on the Official Secrets  
Act cited, 5, 6, 34
- European Committee, Johannesburg .  
432
- Fabian Society, London 326
- Fawcett : 149*n*, 293*n*, 370
- Fergusson, Sir James : 117*n*
- Fisher : 436, 443
- Fitzjames Stephen, Sir James : 147*n*
- Forest, Mr. : 139
- Fowler, Sir Henry Hartley : 370*n*
- Fraser, Sir Andrew : 109*n*, 110, 305, 365
- Fuller, Sir Bampfylde : 194, 358*n*, dismis-  
sal of, demanded, 361, 364-7
- Gandhi (Secretary, Reception Committee,  
Surat Congress) : 242, 244-6
- Gandhi, M. K., and question of Indians  
in South Africa, 401-4, 409, 411, 413-4,  
417, 419-22, 425, 442, 450-2, 454-63,  
467, 468, treatment given to, in Durban,  
405 8, compromise with General Smuts,  
412, 421, estimate of, 420, 433, 444-5
- Gateacre, General : 161
- Ghose, Motilal : 360*n*
- Ghose, Dr. Rash Behary : 28*n*, 29, 35,  
41, 54, 192, 242, 246, 250, 251
- Giles 128*n*
- Gladstone 189, 191, 238, 370, quoted,  
201-2, 335
- Gladstone, Lord (Governor-General of  
South Africa) : 443
- Gokhale, Gopal Krishna, and the Press  
Bill, 1910, 71-4, watched by the C I D ,  
111-2; maiden speech in the Congress,  
144, First Member of the Servants of  
India Society, 182, work in England,  
212-4; Surat Congress, 242-51, stand on  
self-government for India, 247-8, repor-  
ted to be hooted at Sholapur station,  
305; circumstances under which a draft  
of post-war reform scheme was prepared,  
313-4, profound admirer of Morley,  
362, Gandhi, 420, 433, 444-5; Dadabhai  
Naoroji, 445, Ranade, 445; work in  
South Africa, 435-6, 442-6, 455, 468 9,  
471-4, sense of relief at the termina-  
tion of the South African tour, 435,  
444
- Halleybury system 81*n*
- Halliday, Sir Frederick 205
- Hanmantrao 139
- Hansraj 25*n*
- Harcourt 442*n*
- Harcourt, Sir William 138*n*
- Harris, Lord 158*n*
- Harrison 236*n*, 237, 239-40
- Hartington, Lord 151*n*
- Havell 200
- Herschell Committee, 1893 . 156
- Hewett, Sir John 112
- Hichens, W. L. : 264*n*, 273
- Hindu*, Madras : 146
- Hindu-Mohamedan question 307-12;  
separate electorates, 309-10, *see also*  
Mohamedans
- Hobhouse, C. E. H. : 90*n*, 264*n*
- Home military charges of India, protest  
against injustice to India, 149-56, mili-  
tary portion of the Home charges, 152 5
- Hosken 432
- House of Commons, representation to  
Indians in, urged, 349
- Hume, A. O. : 291-3, quoted, 214
- Hunter, William Wilson : 346*n*, 369
- Ibbetson, Sir Denzil 38
- Indentured Indian labour . 417, 419, 424,  
454-5, 458, 460, 467
- India* : 248
- India, agriculture in, 229-30, place in  
British Empire, 326 7, nature of the  
government, 327-9, economy of, 331,  
345 6; rising mortality rates in, 346-7  
and Ireland, 355, and the impact of  
Western civilization, 380-8
- Indian Civil Service, vested interests of,  
193, 204, 324, recruitment to the Judi-  
cial branch of, 207; simultaneous exami-  
nation for, urged, 356, *see also* Public  
Service

- Indian Councils Act, 1892 : 76; rules under the Act defeat the object of the Act — case of Bombay, 157-9
- Indian National Congress : 321, 331, 333, 352, 359, 370, 372; achievements, 174, 176, 218-9; Presidential address, 1905, 187-209; aims and aspirations of, 200-4, 206-8, 247-8, 417-8; Extremists' version of Surat Congress refuted, 242-51
- Indian Official Secrets Act, 1889, opposed, 5-17
- Indian Sociologist* : 248
- Indian Spectator* : 164
- Indianization of public service : 80-7; see also Indian Civil Service, Public Service
- Indians in South Africa, see under South Africa
- Ireland, India may emulate the example of, 355
- Jackson : 286
- James, Sir Evan : 114*n*, 118
- Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy : 442*n*
- Japan : 380; a lesson to India, 178, 331, 338, 355, 371, 383
- Jenkins, Sir Lawrence Hugh : 39, 45-7, 55, 71*n*, 73, 74
- Kassimbazar, Maharaja of : 192
- Katrak, Dr. : 239
- Kesari* : 248
- Kimberley, Lord : 151*n*, 154
- Kitchener, Lord : 37, 328*n*
- Knight, Robert : 150
- Krishnaswami Row, K : 173*n*
- Lajpat Rai : 21*n*, 212; deportation of, 21, 25, 37-8 and Surat Congress, 242-3, 245-6, 249-50
- Lamb : 163
- Lancashire, and boycott movement, 325
- Lansdowne, Lord : 33*n*, 151*n*, 190, 410, 418
- Laughton : 405; letter to the *Natal Mercury*, quoted, 406-8
- Leader* : 71, 73
- Legislative Councils (Central and Provincial), no opposition party possible in, 56; reforms proposed, 143-5, 206-7, 287-9, 300-3, 315-7, 348-9; budget, 301-3
- Lely, Sir Frederic : 264*n*, 268
- Le Mesurier, Sir Havilland : 97*n*
- Liberal Party in England : 340, 349, 370
- List, Friedrich : 226*n*
- Local option for liquor shops : 107
- Local self-government, district decentralization, 255-6; Village Panchayats, 256-7; Taluka Boards, 257-9; Municipalities, 259; District Boards, 259-60, 290; see also District Advisory Councils, Municipalities (Mofussil) Bill, (Bombay), 1901, Royal Commission on Decentralization, 1907
- London Indian Society : 358*n*, 364*n*
- Looker-On* : 73
- Lytton, Lord : 59, 151*n*, quoted, 203
- Macaulay, Lord : 342, 373
- MacDonnell, Lord : 305
- Macfarlane : 152
- Mackarness, F. C. : 44*n*
- Mackenzie, Dr. : 403
- Madge : 79
- Mohamedans, reaction to constitutional reforms, 304; deputation to Lord Minto, 77, 305; Hindu-Mohamedan question, 307-12; excessive representation to, deprecated, 310-12; special electorates for, necessary, 76-9; occupy position of importance in India, 77-8
- Malaviya, Madan Mohan : 76*n*, 78, 79, 107, 247
- Malvi : 244-5, 250-1
- Manchester, and boycott movement, 325
- Manchester Guardian* : 325; 'Gokhale's interview to, on the plague operations in Poona, 160-4, 166-8
- Mant : 38
- Manubhai Nanabhai : 244
- Mayo, Lord : 151*n*, 283
- Mehta, Sir Pherozeshah : 115*n*, 138*n*, 149*n*, 178, 282, 310; caucus formed to prevent the election of, to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, deprecated, 236-41
- Memorandum of the Nineteen : 314*n*
- Meyer, W. S. : 264*n*, 277
- Mill, John Stuart, quoted, 121, 202
- Milner, Lord : 411*n*
- Minto, Lord : 26*n*, 71, 74, 77, 188, 194, 304, 354, 364, 367, 371, 375, 377, 379; Morley-Minto Reforms, assessment of

- 291-9, 376-9, 389; a note, 287-90; letter to the London *Times* on the comments on the note, 304-6
- Morison, T. : 9
- Morley : 23*n*, 37, 38, 55, 67, 71, 74, 208, 291, 293, 304-5, 335, 361-2, 367, 371, 375-7, 379, 386, 388, 391, 422; Morley-Minto Reforms assessment of, 291-9, 376-9, 389, a note, 287-90, letter to the London *Times* on the comments on the note, 304-6
- Morning Post* : 350
- Mudholkar, Ranganath Narsinha : 54*n*, 56, 60*n*, 86, 157-9
- Mukerji, Raja Peary Mohan : 192
- Municipalities : 259
- Municipalities (Mofussil) Bill, (Bombay), 1901 : 114-34, proportion of elected to nominated members low as compared to other provinces, 117-8, 'notified areas' provision, 118; position of the Chief Officer, 118, municipal duties and obligations, 119-20, Govt control, a source of trouble, 120-1; compulsion to provide accommodation for the police force, opposed, 121-3, sectional representation, opposed, 123-5, only non-compoundable offence may be made a disqualification for membership, 125; provision for appeal against Dist Judge's decision to disqualify a candidate, urged, 125-6; chambers of commerce should have no right to elect members to the Managing Committee, 126-8; provisions making municipalities liable to contribute towards the cost of provincial highways, 129-30, leper and lunatic asylums, 130-1, Govt dictation in taxation matters, opposed, 132, minimum limit of population for a city municipality, 133
- Mymensingh, Maharaja of : 192
- Naoroji, Furdunji : 150*n*
- Natal, treatment given to Indians in, 344, 399-408, 415, 445-8, 456-7, 464-5, 467-8
- Natal Advertiser* : 401, 403, 404
- Natal Mercury* : 401, 406
- National Liberal Club, London : 340
- Nehru, Motilal : 215*n*
- 'New Party' : 217
- New Reform Club, London : 333, 368
- Northbrook, Earl of : 18*n*, 149, 150-2, 154
- Northcote, Sir Stafford Henry : 151*n*
- Norton, Cardley : 73, 143
- Official Secrets Act, *see* Indian Official Secrets Act, 1889
- Ollivant, Sir Charles : 114*n*, 115, 116, 126-7, 130, 134
- Ommaney 140*n*
- Opposition party in Indian Legislature, a misnomer, 56
- Orange Free State, treatment given to Indians in, 445-6, 456, 464, 468
- Pal, Bipin Chandra 210*n*
- Pal, Kristo Das : 150*n*
- Pall Mall Gazette* 140
- Palmerston, Lord : 238
- Parekh : 128
- Parmeshwar Lall 358*n*
- Passive resistance, in South Africa, 414, 417-25, 444-5, 451
- Patwardhan, Anant Vinayak : 181*n*, 182*n*
- Peile, Sir James Braithwaite : 117*n*, 123
- Petit, Bomanji Dunsshaw : 128*n*
- Plague operations in Poona, 'excesses' of British soldiers — interview to the *Manchester Guardian*, 160-3, apology to the Governor of Bombay with reference to the interview, 163-7, the Governor's reactions, 167-8, 172, letter to *The Times of India* replying to the criticism on his apology, 168-72
- Polak : 421-2, 425, 455
- Police administration in India, resolution on the enquiry into, supported, 109-13, working of C I D criticized, 110-3; *see also* District Police Act, 1890
- Political agitation, loss of faith in, 173-4, 'a subject nation can have no politics' a wrong notion, 177, 179-80, constitutional agitation, a failure, 218
- Poverty in India 232
- Pratt, Hodgson : 204, quoted, 205
- Presidency Association, Bombay : 27*n*, 149, 281, 304, 310, 368
- Press Act, 1910 : 44-6, abuse of, 50-2, 74; *see also* Vernacular Press Act, 1878
- Press Bill 1910 : 56-8, 58-70, 71-3
- Press in India : 351, disastrous effect on, by the Official Secrets Act, 5-7, 11-2,

- 14-7; a potent instrument of progress, 62; Anglo-Indian press, 63; intimidation of, 366
- Prince of Wales, loyal welcome to, 187-8
- Proclamation of 1858 : 187, 203, 327, 335-6, 341, 350, 352-3, 369, 374, 382
- Provincial administration : 287, 314-5, 391
- Provincial Councils, elected majority in, recommended, 78-9, 315; *see also* Legislative Councils
- Public Service, division of, into Imperial and Provincial, criticized, 83-5; simultaneous examinations to, urged, 146-8; *see also* Indianization of Public Service
- Public Service Commission, 1886 : 82-3, 146
- Punjab, agitation in, 25, 37-8
- Punjabee* : 25, 37-8
- Quin, H. O. : 98*n*
- Quinton, J. W. : 137*n*
- Railway Department, employment of Indians in, 7
- Raleigh : 13*n*
- Ramabai, Pandita : 171
- Ramanathan, P. : 358*n*
- Ramaswamy Mudaliar, Salem : 146
- Ranade, Mahadeo Govind : 197*n*, 207, 223, 228, 445; quoted, 197, 208-9
- Rand (Plague Commissioner) : 161-2, 166
- Rasul : 359
- Reay, Lord : 117*n*, 138, 140-2, 162
- Reforms, *see* Constitutional Reforms
- Reuter*, misrepresentation by, 400-1, 406-7
- Ripon, Lord : 32*n*, 89, 151, 155, 200-1, 252, 295, 307, 321-2, 329, 334, 343, 356, 370, 375, 378
- Risley, Sir Herbert : 51*n*, 57, 58, 65, 68, 70, 98
- Roberts, Sir John Herbert : 192*n*, 323
- Rogers, Prof. Thorold : 205
- Rosebery, Lord : 326
- Roy, Sir P. C. : 35*n*, 84
- Royal Commission on Decentralization 1907 : 90, 92, 95, 96, 294, 304, 377-8; evidence analysed, 97-8, 101-2; statement submitted to, 252-63; oral evidence, 264-86
- Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, 1897 : 160
- Runciman : 471
- Saiyid Muhammad Bahadur, Nawab : 8*n*, 9
- Salisbury, Marquis of : 18*n*, 228; quoted, 18, 151*n*
- Sandhurst Lord : 162, 165*n*; Gokhale's apology to, 163-7; reactions of, to the apology, 167-8, 171-2
- Saraya, Chunilal D. : 249
- Sarma, B. N. : 211*n*
- Schwann, Sir Charles Ernest : 321*n*
- Scoble, Sir Andrew Richard : 10*n*
- Scotchman* : 140
- Secretary of State for India : 327-8; Council, 348-9; reforms proposed, 207
- Seditious Meetings Bill, 1907, opposed, 18-36; — 1910, opposed, 39-46; — 1911, opposed, 47-58
- Selborne, Lord : 411*n*
- Self-government for India, urged, 347-8, 350-7, 373-5
- Servants of India Society : 282; members watched by the C.I.D., 112; original constitution of, 181-5; bye-laws, 185-6
- Shafi : 106
- Shyamji Krishnavarma : 248
- Sinha, Lord : 64*n*, 65, 71-4
- Smith, Sidney : 46*n*
- Smuts, General : 409, 412, 421-2, 436, 443, 450, 452, 456-7
- South Africa, plight of Indians in, 399-408, 426-34, 436-41, 445-53, 454-70; passive resistance in, 414, 417-25, 444-5, 451; fear of Europeans, unjustified, 427-32, 436-7, 449-50, 459-61
- Spencer, Herbert, quoted, 172
- Srinivasa Sastri, V. S. : 137*n*, 313*n*
- Stuart, Sir Harold : 51*n*
- Subba Rao, N. : 80*n*, 81, 83
- Sugar industry : 231-2
- Sundaram Iyer, P. R. : 211*n*
- Surat Congress, *see under* Indian National Congress
- Swadeshi movement : 195-200, 216, 220, 223-35, 248-9; *see also* Boycott
- Tagore, Jotindra Mohan : 192
- Tagore, Rabindranath : 35*n*
- Taluka Boards : 257-9

- Tata, Ratan J. : 417*n*, 425, 452, 469  
 Telang, Kashinath Trimbak : 116*n*  
 Textile industry : 230-1  
 Thackersey, Sir Vithaldas : 69*n*, 91*n*, 111, 197-8, quoted, 198-200  
 Tilak, Bal Gangadhar : 144*n*, 217 and Surat Congress, 242-51  
*Times*, London : 287, 350 and Crawford Case, 139, 140, letter to, on the constitutional reforms, 304-6  
*Times of India* : 101, 137*n*, 400 and Crawford Case, 138-9, Gokhale's letter to, justifying his apology, 168-72, editor of, alleged to have written the apology, 171  
 Transvaal, treatment given to Indians in, 345, 409-18, 423-4, 445-8, 454, 456-7, 459, 464-9  
 Umar Hayat Khan : 75*n*  
 Universal Races Congress, London : 380*n*  
 Vernacular Press Act, 1878 : 59*n*  
 Vidal : 139  
 Village Panchayats : 256-7  
 Vincent (Bombay Police Commissioner) : 171  
 Wacha, Dinshaw Edulji : 150*n*, 197, 199, 251  
 Wahed, Suleman Abdul : 241  
 Wedderburn, Sir William : 143*n*, 168-70, 172, 291-3  
*Weekly Chronicle* : 366  
 Welby Commission, *see* Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, 1897  
 West, Sir Raymond : 122*n*, 140*n*  
 Weston : 34  
 Wilson, A : 137*n*  
 Wilson, Woodrow, quoted, 94, 104  
 Wood, Sir Charles : 151*n*  
 Wood, Martin : 150  
 Wordsworth, on liberty, 399  
 Wynne, T : 87*n*  
 Yule, George : 205

